



# **Wickedest Witch**

Eve Langlais

Published 2010

ISBN 978-1-59578-764-4

Published by Liquid Silver Books, imprint of Atlantic Bridge Publishing, 10509 Sedgegrass Dr, Indianapolis, Indiana 46235. Copyright © 2010, Eve Langlais. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, recording or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the author.

Manufactured in the United States of America

Liquid Silver Books  
<http://LSbooks.com>

Email:  
[raven@LSbooks.com](mailto:raven@LSbooks.com)

Editor  
Victoria Miller

Cover Artist  
Amanda Kelsey

This is a work of fiction. The characters, incidents and dialogues in this book are of the author's imagination and are not to be construed as real. Any resemblance to actual events or persons, living or dead, is completely coincidental.

## **Blurb**

Evangeline is not a very nice witch, but ask her if she cares. However, she does have a healthy sexual appetite, and when an uncouth shifter starts appearing in her fantasies, it's not long before she makes her erotic mind play a reality. But everyone knows a wicked witch can't fall in love, or can she?

Ryker, a hot and muscled shifter, knows his size and dominating presence intimidates women, all except for one curvy witch he just can't get out of his mind. Set to a task only the two of them can accomplish, he discovers wickedness has its uses, especially in the bedroom.

Dealing with vamps, a wedding from hell and a cackling gnome named Rumpelstiltskin, will these two wicked beings survive and, even more disturbing, decide to stay together?

## Prologue

“You’re just too evil for me,” Derek said with a shrug, trying to look apologetic.

Evangeline wanted to retort, but he spoke the truth, a nasty habit of his. *Why is it evil to take what I want? It’s not as if I kill people—often. The way I look at it is if they’re too stupid to get out of my way then they deserve to die before they do something even stupider, like procreate.* She found the remark by her soon-to-be ex-lover ironic, for Derek made his living as a thief, but unlike Robin Hood, he didn’t steal to give to the poor. Derek stole to supplement his rather rich lifestyle, yet the smug bastard had the nerve to call her evil?

“And what brought this on?” she asked, pursing her lips and placing her hands on her hips, a sign of agitation he foolishly ignored. “You knew about my reputation before we started dating.”

Derek ran a hand through his hair. “I knew what others said, but I thought they exaggerated. I didn’t think you were that bad. I mean come on? Did you really have to turn all their candy into broccoli? They were just kids.”

Evangeline wanted to roll her eyes. *I can’t believe he’s still harping on that. It happened weeks ago.* “I don’t approve of Halloween, making fun of witches and what not,” she said. She couldn’t help her yearly annoyance at the way the media had bastardized a sacred holiday, one the mystical society she belong to revered. “Served them right. Besides, isn’t the media always telling us that children need to eat healthier?”

“See? This is why I can’t be with you. You just don’t get it.”

“Get what?” she frowned. “I don’t believe this. You’re dumping me?” Evangeline knew she should feel something, after all, they’d dated—make that fucked—for close to three months, a new record for her. Yet, as she looked upon his lanky frame, the only feeling she could claim? Annoyance. *How dare he break up with me, and right before my sister’s wedding, too.* Now where would she find a date—she’d scared off most of the male population already. As for those that remained, well, they were single for a reason.

“I’m sure you’ll find someone else. Someone who will—” He paused for a moment as he searched for diplomatic way of breaking up. She should have told him not to bother. “—appreciate your unique qualities.”

“Derek, you really aren’t too bright are you. Then again, I didn’t date you for your brains.” No, she’d dated him for the sex—Derek lacked many things, but he sported a thick one and, with a little direction from her, learned how to use it. Evangeline arched a perfect brow at him and smiled sweetly, perhaps a tad too much judging by his blanching face. “You really should have ignored Ms. Manners and done this from a much safer location—say on another continent. Good bye Derek.” With a waggle of her fingers, Evangeline drew on her innate magical power and turned him into a rat. She enjoyed meting out karma, in this case a body to match his actions.

With a squeak, Derek scurried off and Evangeline laughed. To think he’d had the nerve to break up with her. He should count himself lucky she hadn’t turned him into a grease spot.

They didn’t call *her* the Wickedest Witch for nothing.

## Chapter One

Ryker slouched on the bar stool, a pleasant drunken buzz muting the natters of the crowd and making the buck toothed shifter—*by the smell, I'd say rabbit*—beside him look much more attractive. Hell, he didn't really care what she looked like. *I'm horny and any female body will do.*

Lurching towards her, he tripped over his own feet and staggered hard against the bar. Startled, she scurried off.

"Damn." Ryker perched back on his stool and signaled Barry behind the bar for another beer.

Barry shook his balding head at him. "I think you've had quite enough, pal. Time you called it a night."

"What are you? My mutha?" slurred Ryker. *Okay, so I might be a little drunk. Big fucking deal. I'm a big boy, and it's not as if I'm driving.*

"What's up with you?" asked Barry wiping down the bar in front of him. "I've never seen you like this before. Does this have anything to do with your visit back home?"

"Nope." Like he'd lay bare the details of that embarrassment. So much for doing his family proud and following tradition. Not that Ryker truly cared about those things, he'd just done it—or sadly attempted to—for his mother.

Barry just gave him a hard look then sighed. "Drinking won't make whatever happened go away."

"Dass what you tink," said Ryker, shaking his head, trying to dislodge the cloud that fogged his mind and words. Barry went off to serve other folks, and Ryker debated making his way home—alone. The pickings left in the bar had devolved into couples and Ryker did not do threesomes, well except that one time with the best friends—there wasn't a man alive who would have said no to that pair of wood nymphs.

Standing proved to be a difficult prospect though, made even more so when the room began to spin. Sitting down hard, Ryker rested his arms on the counter and put his face in his hands.

*This is fucking pathetic.*

The bitter scent of coffee—black—drifted into his cocoon of self-inflicted misery.

"Drink up, old man," said his best friend, make that only friend, Barry. An acerbic tongue and hot temper did not endear him to many people.

Wrapping big hands around the warm mug, Ryker gulped down some of the piping hot brew, the instant caffeine jolt bringing some clarity back to his mind.

As he drained the last of the java and put the cup down, the door to the bar opened, and in blew a sharp, cold breeze, which brought with it a woman. Ryker noticed her immediately, as did his inner beast, even though he personally found her a tad too skinny for his taste.

Model slim and tall, her shoulder length black hair swung in a straight bob framing an angular face. She sauntered to the bar like she owned the place and ordered a glass of red wine. Ryker's nose twitched as the sweet smell of shampoo and a musky perfume wafted over from her direction. As if bespelled, Ryker found himself unable to look away. *I have to talk to her.*

Feeling his stare upon her, the woman looked over, her eyes cool and appraising. He especially liked the condescending smirk on her full, luscious lips—women with character always drew him.

Ryker's lips curled into a masculine grin that had gotten more than one pair of panties dropped. Raising a brow, she looked him up and down, then she sniffed in disdain before turning away.

Ryker's dark brows drew together in consternation. *Dyke*. Even drunk, most women fawned over him. *One night with me and I bet I can get her to play for the right team.*

Barry, seeing his scowl, came over with a chuckle. "Don't feel bad, Ryker. She's a cold one."

"You know her?" Ryker said, still facing her even though she'd turned to give him her back.

Lowering his voice, Barry leaned closer. "I know who she is, and I can say with great confidence that you'd have to be insane to get involved with her even for one night."

"Why?" Ryker asked, intrigued.

"You are looking at the Wickedest Witch." The name, an infamous one whispered about almost as much as his, caught Ryker's attention and he swiveled towards Barry. "I kid you not. She moved into town about four or five months ago. She started coming to the bar around the time you left for home."

Ryker shook his head. "No way. You're fucking with me. I thought she was supposed to be an old crone."

"Could be," said Barry, whispering while shooting nervous glances at the woman. "She is a witch after all. I've heard they can cast spells to make themselves look like anyone they want."

If that were true, then it was a shame she'd chosen tall and skinny 'cause Ryker liked his women with a little plush, it made the pumping more comfortable. However, beggars couldn't be choosers, and Ryker still had an itch. "Spell or not, she's hot and I'm horny. How bad could she be?"

Barry laughed, a sound he quickly tempered. "You've been out of touch for a while my friend. Trust me, she is just as bad as the rumors say. You remember Derek?"

Ryker did vaguely—a thief with some magical skill for cloaking. "What about him?"

"He dated her for a while, and then one day he disappeared. Rumor is she turned him into a door mat."

Ryker put little stock in rumors, especially since there were plenty flying around about him, and while some had a semblance of truth, others would rival the tallest tales. *Witch or not, I want to get to know her. Something about her is pulling at me.* Not to mention his beast hadn't stopped pacing and chuffing inside since it had scented her.

"Derek's a wimp," said Ryker. "A pretty girl like her needs a man—a real man."

"And let me guess, you think you're that guy?" said Barry rolling his eyes. "Care to wager on it?"

"Damned straight. What are we playing for?" Ryker found himself perking up from the funk he'd languished in since his return to town.

"I wager you can't even get her to smile."

Ryker felt like laughing. This would be too easy. "You're on. I win and you clear my tab for the night."

“Lose and you tell me what happened when you went home.”

Cocky and confident, Ryker didn't hesitate slapping his hand against Barry's.  
“You're on. I feel richer already.”

\* \* \* \*

When the big brute, who'd eyed her since she walked in, lurched over to the stool beside her, Evangaline had to restrain a shudder at the alcoholic stench he emitted. Had he *bathed* in the beer? Her nose wrinkled in distaste and she tried to ignore his imposing presence, a surprisingly hard task. Built like a brick house, the stranger might have been attractive had he at least shaven the bristly shadow that covered his face. Intoxicated, and dressed one step above a vagrant, he redefined the term diamond in the rough. The interest in his eye made her want to sigh. *Great. I wonder what lame pickup line he's going to try.* If this weren't the only magic friendly bar in town, she'd have stopped coming here long ago, but sometimes a witch wanted to relax in the company of other people—make that beings—without trying to hide behind a mask of humanity. Not to mention she still hadn't found an escort for her sister's wedding and with the date drawing closer, just about any man, or creature, would do.

“Hey there, cutie. I don't suppose you'd give me a smile?” Her would-be suitor grinned at her engagingly, and while another type of woman might have found it endearing, Evangaline had yet to move on from her men-were-scum stage. However, even in her foul mood, to her surprise, something about him made her libido take notice, which totally pissed her off. She hated surprises.

“Why don't you try your lame pickup line on someone a little drunker and blonder?” She gave him credit when his smile didn't falter.

“Aah, cute and with attitude. Come on, you know you think I'm hot. What say you and I head over to my place and get to know each other in a more intimate sense? The springs in my mattress could use some exercise.”

Evangaline's eyes widened at his crude attempt to get in her panties even as said panties got damp in the crotch. “I'm going to pretend you didn't just say that. Now leave before I turn you into a toad.” Her unexpected bodily reaction made her tone and words harsh. She didn't like the baffling erotic interest her body had for this stranger. *Has he cast a lust spell on me?*

“Sounds like foreplay to me. Tell you what, how about instead I turn into your bucking bronco and you can be the cow girl that likes to ride astride.” He said this with a cocky grin and finished with a wink.

Her jaw dropped at his effrontery, then tightened. She could hear the barkeep's guffaws as he unabashedly listened in. *The nerve! I'll teach him to fuck with a witch.* She ignored the titillating vision he'd painted even as her body reacted, her nipples tightening in interest.

Evangaline waggled her fingers and ... nothing happened. Frowning, she wiggled them again and pushed harder at her magic. Again, nada.

The drunken idiot laughed. “Sorry, little witch. I'm protected against direct magic, being a shifter and all, but I promise I can still make lots of magic in the bedroom.”

Figured the idiot with the crass pickup lines would be a bloody shifter and immune to her spells. Not really a problem, Evangaline had more than one trick up her sleeve. Hooking her foot around the bottom of the stool he'd perched on, she yanked it and

dumped her would-be suitor on the floor. She also poured her glass of wine over him for good measure.

As he lay there looking dumbfounded, she laughed finally; her voice husky with derision. “Consider that a no,” she said with a cold smile before sidestepping his prone body and heading for the door. She swept out into the night, puzzled at the fact her pulse raced and her cheeks were flushed with heat.

*How did that uncouth beast turn me on? Even stranger, why does a part of me wish I'd accepted his offer and gone back to his place to check out the springs in his mattress?*

\* \* \* \*

Ryker rose from the bar floor and shook himself like a wet dog before sitting back on his stool. Taking the towel, Barry handed him, he dabbed at the wine the witch had poured over him. *Man, that woman's got spunk. Betcha she'd be wild in bed. Maybe if I took her from behind her bony hips wouldn't bruise me. Then again, I'd first have to convince her to spread her legs far enough to enjoy herself.*

Barry shook his head at him. “You just had to antagonize her didn't you? Count yourself lucky you are a shifter or right now I'd probably be mopping up a puddle.”

“Ah, please, she's a pussy cat underneath all that attitude. She just has sharp claws. Now I believe I won, so since my tab is now paid up, hand over another beer would you and tell me more about this wicked witch.”

Ryker found his interest aroused—along with other parts—by her feisty attitude. The deadly tone she'd used when she'd threatened had sent shivers—of a good kind—up and down Ryker's spine. Skinny or not, the girl had guts, something Ryker rarely saw in women as they tended to mostly be intimidated by his size and reputation.

*Not to mention scared sometimes, too,* he thought with annoyance.

He had to admit, even if only to himself, that the thought of being with someone who lacked fear and possessed the courage to stand up to him was a major turn on. What a pity the only available woman he'd found so far with that quality ended up being a witch. *But damn, I bet she's wicked in bed.*



## Chapter Two

Evangeline parked her broom in the front hall closet, and with a snap of her fingers dropped the glamor she wore whenever she went out. She'd learned years ago if she wanted people—and beings—to take her seriously as a force to reckoned with, she needed to look the part. Unfortunately, her real life petite and curvy frame did not make for an imposing witch, not to mention, who ever heard of a witch with freckles?

So, draining as the magical glamor could be to maintain, she used it and adopted a cold, ice queen persona that made people get out of her way. Besides, she liked her alter ego. She'd made her tall with a great set of legs.

Her crystal ball flashed from its spot on the living room table, a sign of messages waiting. Evangeline kicked off her heels and wandered over to it in stockinged feet. Her own magical version of an answering machine, she only needed to place a hand on it to play back her messages.

*"Evangeline, are you there? Hello? Evangeline? Stupid machine. It's your mother, call me."*

Beep.

*"Eva! Oh, by Satan's horns, are you never home? You had better be at that dress shop for your fitting on Friday or I am so going to send a demon after you."*

Evangeline rolled her eyes at her sister's message. *Not another dress fitting, I'd rather baste for a while over the flames of hell.*

Beep.

A high-pitched voice spoke next. *"This message is for Wicked Incorporated. I am in need of the services of a witch of your caliber. If interested in making an obscene amount of money, please meet me at..."*

Evangeline scrambled for a pen and paper to write down the instructions. She recognized both the address and the voice. The speaker wasn't kidding when he said she'd make an obscene amount of money. She'd worked for him before. She wondered what he needed this time. Last time, he'd wanted her to turn a pony into a unicorn for his daughter's birthday, a huge success, even if it resulted in a flood of calls from others asking for more party tricks. Of course, most of them had politely hung up when she mentioned her going rate, which didn't bother her, as she had no interest in being some kind of parlor trick.

As she thought up ways to spend the money she'd soon be making, she readied for bed. For some reason, she couldn't stop thinking of the stranger from the bar—more specifically his big, *very* masculine body. What she wouldn't give right now to have that male body with her in bed, naked of course. She'd noticed the bulging muscles that rippled under his clothes. *I wonder if his shaft is as thick as the rest of him.* Evangeline very much liked a well-endowed man.

With a squirm of arousal, she slid her hands under the covers and pulled off her damp panties. She slid her fingers slid through her curls and found her clit. After wetting her index finger with her own juices, she stroked her sensitive nub and closed her eyes in pleasure. For a naughty visual, she imagined the shifter's heavy frame poised above her, the muscles in this arms tensing as he held himself up, the tip of his cock poised against

her sex. He'd dip his head down and suck on her breasts, his unshaved jaw abrading her soft skin.

Evangeline sighed and her finger rubbed more quickly. She slid two fingers from her free hand into her wet pussy, the slickness and heat exciting her. Biting her lip, she imagined the feel of his prick sliding between her thighs straight into her damp sheath, his thickness stretching her and filling her. Her muscles clenched her pumping fingers and her breath hitched as she worked herself faster. Amazing how a fantasy of a complete stranger could excite her. *I bet he's the type of guy who likes to fuck hard, his long shaft driving deep while he sucks on my nipples.* With a cry of pleasure, Evangeline came, the ripples of her orgasm squeezing her embedded fingers tight.

Stunned at her quick bout of self-pleasure, she went to the washroom to wash up, still plagued by naughty thoughts of the rugged stranger.

*I really need to find a new lover, quick. Look at me, fantasizing about a dirty shifter. I must be desperate—and horny. With my sister's wedding coming up soon, perhaps I shouldn't have dismissed him so hastily.*

And on that thought, she curled up and went to sleep, only to have even more erotic dreams that had her wet and squirming all night long.

\* \* \* \*

Across town, Ryker woke to a raging hard on, his erotic dream of fucking some plump hottie too much for his libido to handle.

Ryker didn't know where he'd seen his dream babe before. Surely, he would have remembered her, who wouldn't with her frizzy brown hair in a wild halo around her head. Who could forget her button nose sprinkled with freckles and clear green eyes? She also had a plump figure, the kind made to welcome a man's passions. In his dream, he'd fondled full breasts, plentiful enough to spill through his fingers. She'd boasted full, rounded hips and he dared to hope a smooth round bottom made for slapping up against. Just thinking about the creamy white thighs from his dream made all the blood in his body converge into one spot—one very hard spot.

Closing his eyes, he pictured his fantasy babe lying on her back with her lush breasts beckoning his hot mouth. Ryker's hand closed around his cock and he stroked it, his hand sliding up and down its smooth length. He imagined himself between her creamy thighs, his cock pumping into the wet pussy that welcomed him with tight muscles. His rod thickened even more in his hand as he imagined her legs wrapping around him, locking him tight into her moist sheath. With a bellow, Ryker shot his load, the force of his orgasm surprising him.

*Fuck me. I have to find her. If this how I come from dreaming about her, then I don't even want to think about how it would feel to do it in person.* A thought that made his spent cock lift in interest.

Forget the witch he'd met earlier. He needed to find his green eyed, dream babe.

### Chapter Three

Evangeline arrived right on time for her appointment and the staid butler immediately ushered her into the immense mansion.

She'd dressed professionally in a slim black skirt, matching jacket and scarlet blouse. Her glamor image had matching lipstick, although why she cared, she didn't know. She hadn't run into her rude suitor of a few nights ago, then again, she also hadn't returned to the bar. While she quite enjoyed masturbating to his image, the reality of his personality—crass—not to mention his caste—disgusting shifter—didn't make it a relationship, or even a concept worth pursuing.

Arriving at a set of large double doors, the butler led her into the massive home office.

"The master will be with you shortly."

With those words, the servant left and Evangeline sat down in one of the chairs facing the desk to wait.

The rich and powerful seemed to believe people should be kept waiting, an odd protocol she found exasperating, but which she'd become used to. She passed the time looking around, the opulent display of wealth almost obscene from the teak bookshelves, to the marble top on the desk, and the display of knick-knacks—all quite rare—that lay scattered around the room.

Hearing a sound behind her, she quickly stood up and turned to greet her prospective employer, only to exclaim instead, "You!"

Instant irritation mixed annoyingly with arousal suffused her as she regarded the man whose face and body she'd imagined countless times over the past few days, usually while touching herself. Evangeline's lips tightened even as her sex grew damp.

*Who the hell let that dirty beast into the house?* Mind you, he'd cleaned up since she'd met him. No longer did he sport a bristly jaw, wild ruffled hair and bloodshot eyes. Actually, he was downright bloody gorgeous, something she noticed begrudgingly while mentally adjusting his appearance in her upcoming fantasy for the night. *I never noticed the other night just how startling blue his eyes were and his hair, like thick ebony silk.*

He looked like a bad boy poster come to life in hip hugging blue jeans, an open neck black button shirt and black boots. In other words, superhot ... except for the sneer on his face. Funny how that expression seemed to follow her wherever she went.

His lip curled back and he drawled, "Well, if it isn't the bitch. Oops, did I slip, I meant to say witch."

Evangeline's nails dug into her palms as she struggled to hold on to her boiling temper. *He might be good looking, but he's an asshole even sober. If he weren't a shifter, he'd be so dead right now.* She took a step towards him, but he backed away with a shake of his head.

"Fool me once," he said, shaking his finger at her. "You might have caught me by surprise the other night at the bar, but I'm completely sober now and wise to your tricks. Unless you just can't keep your hands to yourself, in which case have at it," he said spreading his arms wide and inviting her to touch.

A surge of lust almost took her breath away even as her vision turned red.

Evangeline rarely lost control of her temper, but something about him drove her absolutely nuts. As if possessed, she found herself stepping forward, her hand swinging to slap the smug grin off his face.

A calloused hand moved lightning quick and caught hers before she made contact, the touch of his bare skin sending an electrical tingle throughout her body. It also made her magical glamor waver and she saw his face register shock as her actual petite, curvy form became visible. *Stupid shifter disrupting my spell.*

"You," he whispered disbelievingly.

Evangeline didn't understand the look he gave her, one that registered recognition. Her confusion over his reaction made her miss his free hand coming to rest on her waist, but she felt it even through her clothes. Like a molten hot brand, the touch of his hand made her knees go weak and he pulled her unresistingly up against the hardness of his body. And she meant hard.

Evangeline's eyes widened at the evidence of his arousal pressing against her. *This doesn't make sense. Men do not become aroused at the sight of my plump and freckled self.* As she puzzled over this surprise, he threw her another as he pulled her up to meet his lips and for once, she didn't protest, too caught up in the erotic spell he'd cast over her.

Their lips touched and a disturbing sense of rightness clamored through her, one that screamed "Mine!" A foolish thought that she quickly forgot as she lost herself in the sensation of his lips. They rubbed firmly against hers and stoked the fire that burned between her legs. He drew her closer into him, his strong grasp lifting her so she didn't need to crane to taste the sweetness of his mouth. Her body molded against his, the hardness of his erection pressed against her, and she mewled, frustrated at the layers that separated their skin.

A high-pitched voice startled her from the embrace. "Excellent, you already know each other," said Mr. Rumpelstiltskin, entering the office.

Evangeline pushed away from man who'd bespelled her and rubbed her lips even as her cheeks flushed in embarrassment. Her hand came up lightening quick and cracked across the shifter's face. "Pig!"

His head barely budged, testament to his solidity. "Funny, a second ago you weren't complaining about my heritage, and it's feline by the way, not porcine."

Evangeline might have launched herself at him if Mr. Rumpelstiltskin hadn't laughed and clapped his hands. "Marvelous as this show is, we do have business to tend to, children. But please feel free to resume this once we're done here."

Her patron's humor tempered the simmering rage inside her, and taking a calming breath, Evangeline forced her face back into placid lines, her glamor back in place now that the shifter no longer touched her.

He didn't look in the least bit ruffled, although she thought she detected a hint of amusement glinting in his blue eyes.

Mr. Rumpelstiltskin almost seemed disappointed at their cool poses. "Yes, well, I've obviously called both of you here for a job. It requires both of your skills and will be *quite* lucrative if you succeed."

*Work with the brick house?* Evangeline's brows drew together and she bit her tongue to stop herself from blurting out the first words that came to mind.

However, he broke the silence first. "I am not working with a witch."

“Ha, you should be so lucky,” she snapped back. “I don’t require help, and if I did, it wouldn’t be from you, you animal. And my name is Ms. Rasputin, you filthy feline, owner and sole operator of Wicked Incorporated.”

For a moment, his eyes changed color and glinted golden as he let his beast rise for a moment. His whole body took on a hulking, menacing look, one that, instead of inspiring fear like he intended, made her shiver in delight.

His lip curled in disdain. “Rasputin? You’re related to that bloody Russian wizard aren’t you?”

Evangaline lifted her chin up. “He’s my grandfather and one of the greatest wizards still alive.”

“Funny, last I heard being evil didn’t elevate a person to the rank of great. I heard he killed anyone he thought was a threat.”

“He did not,” Evangaline shrieked losing her temper again. “Those are lies. You are so lucky you are a shifter or I’d turn you into a bug and squish you flat for your insults.”

“That’s it, use magic because you’re too chicken to face people on equal footing.”

Somehow, she found herself toe to toe with him—tiptoe because of his height—and he’d crouched down so they could glare at each other nose to nose. Evangaline couldn’t help noticing once again the daunting size of him, a titillating girth that dwarfed her.

“*Enough!*” With a clap of hands that reverberated like thunder, Mr. Rumpelstiltskin drew their attention. “While I am enjoying this sparring match immensely, now is not the time. I have hired you both to accomplish a task and when I say both, I mean it. I am not chancing anything with the treasure I need you to guard. Do I make myself clear, or do I need to hire somebody more professional?”

The rebuke stung and she drew up to all of her five and a half feet—five foot eight when under glamor—and replied indignantly. “If you insist, I will work with this creature, but the pay better be worth it.”

“Yeah, Rumpelstiltskin” he said with his rumble of a voice. “What exactly do you need that requires the two of us? And the name,” he said, turning to her with dangerous eyes, “is Ryker.”

It figured he’d have a disgustingly masculine name—one that suited him.

“I need you to protect my most precious possession,” said Rumpelstiltskin.

Evangaline wondered what it could be—gigantic gem, magically imbued talisman, priceless scroll...

“Why not use a safe?” asked Ryker.

“Somehow I don’t think she’d enjoy that. Princess, you can come in now.”

Evangaline swiveled to look behind her and saw a slip of a girl, entering the office with dainty steps. She moved to stand beside Rumpelstiltskin.

“This is my most precious possession. My first born and only daughter, Princess Tina Rumpelstiltskin.”

*He wants us to babysit?* Evangaline had met Tina before at her birthday party, a shy girl who adored her father.

“I am not cut out to be a nanny,” growled Ryker.

“Of course you aren’t,” said the ugly dwarf. “I need you as bodyguards for an upcoming event. Actually, Evangaline, you’re already slated to attend, so this will work out well.”

Evangaline frowned as she tried to decipher his words. *What upcoming event? I*

*don't go out. The only thing I'm going to anytime soon is...* “Ah, bloody hell, you can't be serious,” she blurted. “My sister's wedding?”

Rumpelstiltskin bobbed his head and beamed. “Yes, they're already calling it the wedding of the century. Rasputin's grand-daughter and the prince of Hell, what a match up.”

“Your sister is marrying Lucifer's son?” asked an incredulous Ryker. “Talk about ensuring an evil bloodline.”

“Shut up,” hissed Evangaline. “He's not that bad. Actually, he's surprisingly decent given his parentage. And besides, it's none of your damn business.”

Ryker just smirked at her, then turned to face Rumpelstiltskin again. “Why on earth would your daughter need protection at a wedding?”

“Princess, why don't you run along and see if cook has finished those pastries. Papa will be done shortly.” With a kiss on his gnarled cheek and a smile, the girl skipped off. Rumpelstiltskin waited until the door shut before speaking. “My daughter needs protection because my cow of an ex-wife,” said the dwarf with narrowed eyes, “is supposed to be attending. She still hasn't forgiven me for getting our daughter in the divorce. Claims I tricked her into giving up her first-born. Bullshit of course. Heidi only ever married me for my money. Just like she only had Tina for more money. But she pissed through her divorce settlement, so now she's crying foul. I've had a seer looking into the paths of the future for me, and in one of the possibilities she saw Tina being kidnapped at your sister's wedding and used to blackmail me into giving her more money. Unacceptable,” said the little man, thumping the marbled surface of his desk, hard enough that a crack appeared in its polished surface.

Evangaline found his evident power impressive. Her patron had started more than one legend, and she liked seeing he hadn't lost his keen edge or strength.

As to the task, it sounded easy enough except for one thing. “Um, I'd love to help, Rumpel, but you *do* know I'm part of the bridal party? My mother would have a fit if I told her I was backing out now.”

“Already taken care of. You'll only be needed by your sister for the ceremony itself and since they've asked my darling Tina to sing at the ceremony—she has the voice of an angel you know—she'll be close by for that span of time.”

“So what am I needed for?” Ryker interrupted.

“You'll go as Evangaline's escort, of course. The groom's side had a lack of male relatives with all the killing of those in line for the throne of Hell. Therefore, my old friend Lucifer was more than happy to make you a groomsman. He says to tell you he's been watching you with great interest and looks forward to finally meeting you in person.” Rumpelstiltskin grinned mischievously as Ryker shifted his feet, looking distinctly discomfited.

The arrangements seemed too neat and easily done. Evangaline didn't like it one bit. “Wait a second, what if I already have a date?”

Rumpelstiltskin arched a brow at her and Evangaline's cheeks warmed. *How does he know I don't?* Then again, his power came from knowing things that should be secret.

Evangaline heard Ryker snort and without turning her head, she shot her foot out sideways and kicked him in the shin. She held back a smile at his grunt of pain.

“Now as for your fee...” Rumpelstiltskin named a stupidly obscene amount that had both of them nodding their heads. Hell, for that much money she'd work with a whole

gang of shifters.

She and Ryker sat down with Rumpelstiltskin to hammer out the remainder of the details. With the wedding only a week or so away, they'd have to do some reconnoitering of the event venue. As per custom, the bride's family had made all the wedding arrangements using the limitless funds of her sister's impending father-in-law. Given her family's Russian roots—and to please their grandfather—the whole wedding, from binding ceremony to reception, would be held near St. Petersburg in the Catherine Palace. Grandfather had originally wanted Alexander Palace, home of his old friend Tsar Nicholas II, but her mother had argued it lacked the extra size and presence the Catherine Palace would provide. How they managed to secure it for use Evangaline didn't ask. Needless to say, the setting would be beyond lavish with the gilded ballroom, not to mention expansive with its dozens of rooms and hundreds of invited guests.

*This assignment could be tricky. What fun!*

"I trust the two of you can work out the rest of the details," said Rumpelstiltskin, standing up. "I'll want to speak with you both a day or so before the ceremony itself so you can present to me your plan of defense. In the meantime, please don't kill each other. I pay enough workman's comp as it is." With a snorting laugh, their employer left them, and suddenly the cavernous office seemed too small, Ryker's size crowding her.

Awareness once again of his body made her flush, and she blushed unseen within her glamor. He sniffed the air and gave her a slow grin.

"I smell something *good*."

Fucking shifter can smell my arousal. Time to get out of here.

\* \* \* \*

Jeans suddenly too snug, Ryker almost grabbed the witch again so he could see his plump dream goddess. He'd nearly expired of shock when he'd discovered the witch from the bar and his fantasy babe were one and the same. It had taken a lot of will power not to take her right then and there. And she might have let him, too. He could tell by her scent that she wanted him, much as it annoyed her. Actually, his lack of control annoyed him, too, but hornier than he'd ever been, he couldn't seem to help himself. He found himself unwilling drawn to her like a fly to a Venus fly trap, and when the jaws snapped shut ...

*Damn, I'll bet the pleasure would be worth the pain.*

As if she'd read his mind, she jumped up from the chair she'd ensconced herself in and left with a brisk walk. Ryker followed at her heels, wishing she'd drop the fake image so he could see what her real ass looked like. His beast, awake and pacing since he'd walked into Rumpel's office and seen her, kept urging him to pounce on her and bite her neck. Not something his inner kitty had ever wanted to do before and Ryker wondered what it meant.

"When do you want to get together and plan our itinerary?"

She whirled without warning and he bumped into her. She stumbled and he shot his hands out to steady her, the skin-to-skin contact breaking her glamor spell again. Cute as a button and plump as a juicy berry, she looked up at him in irritation.

Poking him in the chest, she spoke to him through clenched teeth. "Listen, Rumpel might want us to work together for the wedding, but that doesn't mean I have to put up with you beforehand, too. I work *alone*. You take care of your end. I'll take care of mine,

and we'll meet up at the wedding."

"Listen witch, I'm not crazy about this either, you're not exactly my ideal partner, but I am not going to mess this up because you can't control your hormones around me." He'd intentionally baited her, not very nice of him probably, but with her real face showing—sweet freckles and all—he quite enjoyed seeing the color rushing to her cheeks and her mouth working soundlessly. He had something else he would have preferred to see her mouth working on, but he'd take what he could get for the moment.

"Of all the conceited things! I am not attracted to you." She lied without blinking, and really well, too. Unfortunately for her, Ryker could smell the truth and it was musky, not to mention distracting.

"Okay, let's pretend for a second you're not pining for my body. We still need to work together if this is going to work. Tell you what, if you keep arguing about it, I'm just going to kiss you until you drop your panties right here and I prove you a liar."

Damn but she brought out his crude side. Unlike any other woman though, she didn't run away from his crassness, nor did she burst into tears, instead—and Ryker couldn't believe this—she looked at him with something akin to admiration.

"Fine," she said after a moment of silence. "We'll work together. Now let me go."

Ryker let her loose, surprised she'd agreed so easily. He'd really hoped he'd get to kiss her again. He watched her step away from him and resume her magical facade.

"Oh, would you drop it already," he said following her outside. "I know what you look like, so there's kind of no point."

"I happen to like it," she said coolly.

"What, looking like a skinny uptight bitch? Your real body is much hotter."

With that parting shot, he straddled his sport bike, crushing his aching balls. With a twist of his throttle, he shot off, eager to get home to relieve the pressure in his groin.

A part of him wished things had gone differently, though, with his dream babe, for he feared the only cure for his massive blue balls resided between the creamy thighs of one foul tempered witch.

\* \* \* \*

Evangeline continued to stare down the long drive long after Ryker had disappeared from sight. Confusion battled with arousal. *That man is so goddamned annoying, but by the hag's third warty tit, he is also fucking hot.*

When he'd issued the ultimatum to work with him or he'd kiss her, she'd almost closed her eyes and pursed her lips. She'd be an even greater liar than usual if she tried to deny how much she'd enjoyed their interrupted one. But getting involved with him? Pure madness.

*Mother would have a kitten if she found out I was dating a shifter. Then again, I don't really want to date him, just have wild, monkey sex with him.* And why on Earth would she even consider getting involved? So what if the attraction seemed mutual, he had as little respect for her as she did for him.

Evangeline liked being in control. Somehow, she didn't see Ryker catering to her, no he'd be a man who took. She shivered, the gush of wetness in her crotch soaking already dripping panties. Suddenly realizing she stood outside of Rumpel's house lusting after her temporary partner, she called for her broom, and casting an invisibility cloak, sped home, unable to stop her lusty thoughts.



*I need my vibrator—the really big one—right now.*

## Chapter Four

The flashing of her crystal ball signaled an incoming call. Peering into its milky depths, she gnawed at her lip even as her body thrummed in excitement, for her nemesis and fantasy lover appeared on its surface—not that he could see her, thank goodness.

Should she answer? Her body screamed yes, so her mind said no.

She let it go to voicemail, and barely restrained a shiver at his velvety baritone when he spoke.

“Listen, witch, I know you’re home. I’m going to be outside of your place in ten minutes. I’ve got an appointment of sorts to meet with Rumpel’s ex. Be downstairs or I’ll assume you want me to come upstairs. And I promise I won’t leave until you’re screaming my name and clawing my back.”

Evangeline almost went crosseyed at his words. *He is the most uncouth, disgustingly hot man I’ve ever had the misfortune to meet. And damn me if I’m not tempted to have him come up and let him fuck me senseless.*

With little time to spare, Evangeline ran for the bedroom and the vibrating egg she kept in her nightstand. No way was she going anywhere with him without taking care of herself first. She wiggled her pants down enough to stick her hand with the egg between her thighs. Slick moisture met her, a natural lube for her toy. As she rubbed the vibrating sphere against her clit, she shuddered, recalling his words—“*until you’re screaming my name and clawing my back.*” Damn that sounded hot! Evangeline began panting as she stroked herself even more quickly. If only she could let go of her dislike of his kind long enough to fuck him, to just feel for once his big muscled body and taste some of the animalistic passion she sensed in him. With a cry, her mini orgasm washed over her, leaving her smiling and sexually relieved.

*And with five minutes to spare.* Quickly, she began righting her clothing, only slightly annoyed that her self-pleasuring precaution had only lasted thirty seconds. *Damn him. I’m getting horny again already.*

\* \* \* \*

Ryker straddled his bike outside her building and watched the entrance while mentally counting down. He really hoped she stayed up there, because his blue balls were screaming for a cure; a cure that had her name, well make that lips, written all over it. His cat in its prison of flesh—AKA his body—wasn’t even bothering with subtlety. It wanted the witch *now*. Ryker ignored its demands. He’d asked his mother about why his inner beast wanted to bite the witch.

That had *not* gone well. He’d assumed it would be some kind of dominance thing, but when his mother went quiet on the phone and said, “Don’t you dare under any fucking circumstances,” he’d quickly grasped that for some unfathomable reason his inner beast had settled on the witch for their mate

*And that’s just fucking nuts. We don’t even like each other, not to mention the whole different species thing.* However, even without his beast’s urging, he couldn’t get her out of his mind. Each thought of her woke his beast and put it in a frenzy, not only that, but

he also ended up with an instant erection. So why had he shown up at her place and given her the ultimatum?

He just couldn't fucking help himself. He had to see her again. Fighting it seemed to make the craving worse, so he decided to confront it, get her out of his system so to speak.

When she came down the stairs with less than a minute to spare, he almost gnashed his teeth. He'd hoped in vain she'd make him come upstairs and take her. He knew she'd look fabulous bent over, naked. His irritation lasted only until he smelt her. Then he just wanted to throw her over his shoulder and run back up the stairs with her. *The little witch pleased herself before coming down. I don't know if I should be pissed or flattered.* He knew his balls were keenly disappointed, even as his beast purred in satisfaction. *I guess I should be glad to know I have the same effect on her. If I play my cards right, I'll be plucking—and tasting—her juicy fruit soon, then maybe this stupid obsession will stop.*

She'd dressed smartly for the occasion in a black pantsuit with heeled boots, and to his annoyance, she also had on her stupid, bitchy looking glamor.

"You might as well drop the glam now before we run into any humans."

"I don't want to," she said stubbornly.

"Fine. When I accidentally touch you and the real you suddenly appears and freaks the humans out, you can go to the council and explain how your vanity was more important than the rules we all abide by." The council punished those who did not follow their number one rule of "Don't let the humans know."

Looking up and down the deserted sidewalk—not surprising given the yuppies who lived here with day jobs—she let her magical facade disappear and her sweet freckled, frowning self came into view. Ryker wanted to kick himself for being stupid and making his horny levels kick up another notch. *Bloody hell, she is just so goddamned cute.* Ryker gestured for her to climb on the bike behind him.

Eyeing his bike, she shook her head. "I can't get on that."

"Why not?" he asked. "Afraid?"

"No," she retorted. "But I'm not exactly dressed for a motorcycle, and I am not wrecking my hair with a helmet."

Ryker could smell the lie. *Why doesn't she want to get on the bike behind me?* He understood when the sharp scent of her arousal surrounded him. *She's afraid to touch me.* Had he not thought she'd have an aneurism of rage, he'd have thumped his chest and accused of her of being chicken again. Actually, on second thought, that sounded like fun.

"I know why. You're afraid if you press your body up against mine, you won't be able to control yourself, and you'll maul me. Don't worry. I'm okay with that. Hell, if you want, I'll unbuckle my pants for you now and give you something to hold onto."

He didn't know why he felt the need to render her speechless—or livid beyond belief—but damn he enjoyed it.

"You are so conceited. Prepare to be wrong." Glaring at him coldly, she swung her leg over the seat of the bike, and with no backrest behind her to hold onto, she had to wrap her arms around his torso.

Ryker sucked in a breath and almost went crosseyed with desire. His beast roared in frustration, which didn't help matters. The sensation of her pressing up against him, her scent of lingering arousal and flowers swirling around him in a heady mix made him

wonder if perhaps he'd gone too far. *Fuck her not being to handle it. I don't know how the hell I'm going to navigate when the only thing I want to drive is my cock between her thighs.*

But drive he did, the cool brisk wind, clearing his mind at least. His groin was a whole other problem. Through his side mirrors, he could see her and what a picture she made with the wind making her cheeks bloom with color. Her sunglasses hid her eyes, but she couldn't hide the way she kept gnawing her lip every time she found herself nuzzling his shoulder.

All too soon, they reached the restaurant. As soon as the bike stopped, his little witch hopped off the bike and in a blink of an eye managed to look cool and poised, that is if you ignored her wild hair.

Ryker got off the bike more slowly, willing his body to return to a more natural—AKA soft—state. His leather jacket thankfully came down part way and hid the semi bulge that had taken up permanent residence since he'd begun dreaming of her. No matter how many times he jerked off, as soon as he thought of or saw her, the erection came back.

Raking his fingers through his hair, he gave her a cocky grin. "Ready, my little *heksen*?" The Danish word for witch came suddenly to his lips like a term of endearment. "I kind of lied earlier. The ex-Mrs. Rumpelstiltskin isn't exactly expecting us. I thought the element of surprise might work in our favor." He expected her to harangue him over his small lie, but once again, she surprised him.

"Perfect. Let's go ambush her, then." With a smile a shark would have found chilling, she led the way into the restaurant with the bearing of a duchess. Holding in a chuckle of admiration, Ryker followed, eager to see her in action.

Evangaline unerringly threaded a path through the dining room, brushing off the *maitre d'* with a glacial stare that had him backing away with his hands up.

Ryker, thumbs looped into his pockets, followed behind with a feral grin that made the patrons in the restaurant give him a wide berth and avoid eye contact. *Why be nice, when you can have them fear you. It makes things so much easier in the long run.*

Ryker recognized Rumpel's ex from the picture he'd pulled up the previous night when researching her. Blonde and statuesque, she'd modeled for years before marrying Rumpelstiltskin and giving him the one thing he didn't have—a child. Judging by the stones glittering at her lobes, neck and fingers, it had been a lucrative move.

Without introduction, Evangaline pulled out the seat opposite Heidi, whose ice queen, blonde looks bespoke good old German stock. It looked like Rumpel had stuck to his ancient roots. Ryker turned a seat backwards and straddled it between the two ladies, having decided to sit back and watch his witch at work.

"Who are you?" asked Heidi imperiously.

"I am your worst nightmare if you piss me off," said Evangaline, crossing her legs and flicking at a piece of imaginary lint on her jacket.

"I think you should leave," said the blonde, raising her hand to signal a waiter.

"I really wouldn't do that if I were you," said his witch, leaning forward. "Besides, aren't you curious as to why your ex-husband hired us?"

"You work for Rumpie?" Heidi lowered her hand and narrowed her eyes at them.

"Wicked Incorporated," said Evangaline, sliding a business card across the table.

Heidi only gave the card a cursory glance. "What exactly is it you're after?"

“Rumor is you want the girl back and are planning to snatch her at a wedding,” said Evangaline, pretending to examine her nails, but Ryker saw through her nonchalant ploy, just like he knew Heidi’s surprise was genuine.

“That spoiled brat? What the hell would I do that for? He wanted her in the divorce, he got her.”

“That’s kind of a cold attitude,” interjected Ryker. “She is your daughter after all.”

Cool, blue eyes turned to look at him, their perusal of his body and the interest that suddenly glinted in them not lost on him, or on his witch, apparently, who stiffened in her seat and whose scent suddenly radiated annoyance.

“Listen, I might have birthed the girl, but that was the closest we ever were. Rumpie doted on that child from day one and had no use for me after her birth. His attitude rubbed off on the girl, and she treated me like a piece of furniture—beneath her notice at that. Now let me ask you why on earth would I want to have her back?”

“More money?” said Evangaline turning Heidi’s attention back to her. “That mansion of yours, as well as your shopping habits, have sucked your divorce settlement just about dry.”

“So what? You think I’m going to kidnap my own daughter and hold her ransom?” Heidi’s disdain came through clearly. “Please. If I ever touched a hair on that child’s head, Rumpie would have me killed, birth mother or not. And as for money, perhaps you should have dug a little deeper. I’m getting married again to a very wealthy man.”

Evangaline didn’t say anything, but her nails clacking on the table in a rapid staccato belayed her irritation. Rumpelstiltskin had purposely led them in the wrong direction and while Ryker wondered at his motive, Evangaline appeared pissed.

Evangaline stood abruptly, and Ryker went to follow suit when the manicured hand of the ex-Mrs. Rumpelstiltskin grasped at his arm and tugged him down.

Giving her a quizzical look, he almost rolled his eyes when Heidi blatantly licked her overly rouged lips and leaned forward, baring her ample cleavage. “Let her go and stay with me for lunch. I’m not married, yet, and I do so love *giving* and *receiving* dessert.”

Ryker didn’t have a chance to answer her obvious overture, for his witch, the sparks almost flying from her green eyes, whirled around. She slammed her hands down on the table in front of the blonde cougar with a resounding smack. Evangaline must have cast some kind of Jedi look-away spell, for the loud noise, not to mention the ozone smell rolling off her, hadn’t drawn the attention of any of the restaurants patrons.

“Get your hands off him,” hissed his witch.

“Or what?” said Heidi arching a brow, while Ryker struggled to withhold a grin.

*Catfight!*

Power sizzled in the air. The static energy made Evangaline’s hair ruffle and lift as if moved by an invisible breeze. Her eyes turned almost black as she channeled and held some magic in an obvious power show. “Or I will suck out the youth you’ve siphoned for years and leave you as desiccated as the mummies in the museum just up the street.”

Heidi’s eyes widened with fear. “You’re a witch.”

“The Wickedest Witch, something you’d know if you’d actually *looked* at my business card.”

As if Ryker had suddenly developed the plague, Heidi’s hand removed itself from his arm and disappeared under the table into her lap. Her face also adopted a more subservient mien. “I’m sorry. I didn’t know who you were. I meant no offense.”

Ryker wanted to laugh at the way the Heidi bowed before Evangaline's evident power, but he found himself much more intrigued by the jealousy his witch had just displayed.

*She might not like me, but she wants me and I don't get the impression she likes to share.*

\* \* \* \*

Evangaline could feel his smug grin as he trailed her out of the restaurant. She'd made an utter fool of herself. *What the hell possessed me to tell her to keep her hands off? It's not like he's mine.* But while her mind knew that, her body still bristled, and she fought the urge to whirl back around and rearrange that uppity bitch's facial features into something Picasso-ish. What a pity magical society rules prohibited petty revenge. Not that she always followed the rules, after all, she hadn't gotten the name of wickedest by being a goody-two-shoes, white witch.

Catching sight of his bike outside, Evangaline wanted to groan. *I can't go back on that thing.* She'd barely made it here without latching onto that tempting neck of his and leaving him a permanent hickey. The willpower required to resist on the ride back might be more than she could handle. In an effort to delay, she whipped out her cell phone and dialed Rumpelstiltskin's office.

The line rang a few times and went to voice mail.

*"Merrily the feast I'll make, today I brew, tomorrow I bake. The day after that trouble will wake, and all will know whom to blame for Rumpelstiltskin is my name. Leave your message after the tone."*

Beep.

"Listen, you little gnome, you'd better have a good excuse for why you led us on a merry chase. We know Heidi's not the problem, so either you tell us what's really going on or you can double my rate if I have to go digging for myself." Annoyed, she snapped her phone shut and looked up to see an incredulous Ryker staring at her in shock.

"Did you just give an ultimatum to one of the most powerful beings in our world?" He sounded almost choked.

Evangaline frowned at him. "He lied. I don't like that. And I meant what I said. If I've got to work harder because he's dickering me around, then he's going to pay for it."

The laughter that came roaring out of him took her by surprise. Most people ran away when she got into one of her black moods.

"What's so funny?" she asked crossly not getting it.

He stopped laughing long enough to say, "You have got the balls of a man," then he roared again.

Evangaline didn't know whether to take that as a compliment or not. Judging by his laughter, probably not. Irritated and aroused at his lack of fear, she wet her lips slowly and sensuously with her tongue. Ryker instantly stopped laughing, his blue eyes with hints of gold taking on a smoldering heat instead.

Smiling at him, and pleased at his reaction, she sashayed close enough to put her hands on his chest and tilted her head back to look up at him. As if mesmerized, he simply stared down at her, a move she found unnerving for she could see his beast reflected in his eyes, and it looked hungry.

"Oh, Ryker," she whispered, standing on tiptoe.

“Yes,” he said dipping his head down lower.

“I don’t like it when people laugh at me.” Before he’d even had time to register her warning, she hooked her foot around his ankle and pushed on his chest, toppling him.

He didn’t hit the pavement. His quick reflexes allowed him to recover and Evangaline took a step back, for the gleam in his eye promised retribution.

*Uh-oh.*

He wagged a finger at her. “Naughty little witch. For that you owe me a kiss.”

Evangaline swallowed hard and warm liquid soaked her panties. She found herself torn between taking the kiss like a woman—and enjoying it—or running before he exerted more of a hold on her.

She foolishly chose the kiss. *I always was a risk taker.*

\* \* \* \*

Ryker couldn’t believe it when her face softened and her lips parted. Not one to waste an opportunity, especially when he’d expected her to run, he quickly folded her into his arms, her plush frame a perfect fit against him. He restrained himself from crushing her velvety lips, instead tasting them gently, her arousal rising in a musky cloud around them and making his primal instincts come forth.

His inner beast paced restlessly inside, the urge to mate—*claim*—the woman in his arms almost overwhelming. He molded her body against his, his firm erection pressing insistently against her stomach, but instead of shying from his evident excitement, she dug her nails into his back and squeezed herself closer to him. He cupped her perfectly rounded ass with his hands as she opened her mouth, her sinuous tongue venturing forth to duel with his.

Had sanity not suddenly prevailed in the form of a catcall—“Get a room!”—and reminded him they still stood—barely—on a city sidewalk, he would have taken her right there and then. He could even picture it. She’d have her pants around her ankles with her rounded tush bent and presented to him.

With a curse, he broke the kiss and moved back in an attempt to regain control of his hormones. A move his beast disliked judging by its snarl of frustration.

The man wanted to snarl, too, as he saw her eyes heavy lidded with desire and her lips swollen and inviting. However, she deserved better than a public rutting—well at least not for their first time. *So, what the hell am I waiting for? Let’s get her back to my place. She is ripe for the plucking.*

Ryker straddled his bike and held his hand out to her. She swayed where she stood, her eyes unfocussed. He gestured for her to join him on the back of the bike and in return, his bed, but she shied back on unsteady feet.

Her forehead creasing, he saw the passion in her eyes fade, replaced with reality. That never boded well.

“Come with me, Evangaline,” he said still hoping she’d let her hormones do the talking.

Fat chance.

Adopting a smooth, expressionless mask, she hid the remaining signs of her capitulation to him. “And just where do you want to take me?” She couldn’t hide the breathiness in her voice and Ryker inwardly smiled. She could pretend all she wanted. He could still smell it. She desired him.

“I don’t suppose you’d like to see the ceiling in my bedroom?”

Expecting the slap that came flying his way, he caught her hand and used it to jerk her close. Again, unlike any other woman who would have been frightened by such a rough move, her eyes smoldered with restrained passion.

“This isn’t over, witch. I’ll be seeing you—*all of you*—soon.”

With a quick, hard kiss on her lips, he let her go and gunned the bike.

*Cold shower and five-fingered shag, here I come.*



## Chapter Five

Evangeline was running late for the dress fitting appointment. She'd needed another cold shower after listening to Ryker's voice on her crystal ball—again. He kept calling and she kept ignoring him. This still left her with one major problem though, her libido, which went into hyperactive mode every time she thought of his firm body or heard his gravelly voice.

Walking into the bridal shop, she wondered why he hadn't come knocking on her door as she'd expected and her body had avidly hoped he would do. *And what would I have done if he had shown up in all his masculine glory?* A vision came to her of licking her way down his chest, following that triangle of hair that led to...

*Damn, another pair of fucking panties to wash. Stupid, oversized...* She didn't even realize she'd grumbled aloud until her sister Isobel said, "Who's too hot for his own good?"

Blushing, Evangeline glared at her sister whom she hadn't even noticed, caught up in her own internal ranting. Unfortunately, her mother and sister had both insisted she go au naturel to the wedding, which meant she couldn't hide the blooming color in her cheeks that had her sister's eyes widening.

"Ooh, have you been hiding things from me, Eva?"

Evangeline scowled, which only deepened her Isobel's grin.

"Can we just get this over with? I have a job I need to do some research on."

"Wow, whoever he is, he's really got your panties in a twist," said her shockingly beautiful—and skinny, the bitch—sister. "Anybody I know?"

"No." A statement she had to revise given her upcoming job. "Kind of. He's a groomsman and he's going to be my partner for the wedding."

"Oh, the man Rumpel wanted you to have to help you guard his little girl."

"You know about the job?" said Evangeline surprised.

"Christopher and I don't keep secrets from each other," said Isobel smugly.

Evangeline had a hard time believing that, after all, her sister's fiancée was the heir to Hell. But hey, if it made her happy to believe it, Evangeline wouldn't ruin it. She might act abrasive with her sister, but the truth she'd deny if anyone asked? She loved her sister deeply. Besides, Evangeline considered her abrasiveness as a part of her charm—or lack thereof.

"So is he hot?" asked Isobel, twirling in front of a mirror and admiring the flowing line of her creamy colored wedding gown.

"Who is hot?" asked her mother coming from the back.

"No one," mumbled Evangeline, wishing her sister would take the hint and STFU. Not likely.

"Eva's got the hots for some guy, and he's coming to the wedding," tattled Isobel, who stuck out her tongue when Evangeline flashed her the finger.

Her mother's eyes widened. "A man. Evangeline, are you keeping secrets? Who is he? What class of magic does he dabble in?"

"He's a pain in my ass and he's not a wizard or sorcerer, so you can get that matchmaking gleam out of your eye, Mother. We're doing a job together, and once it's

done, he is out of my life.”

“But if you like him—.”

“I do not like him,” yelled Evangaline.

“Then why were you blushing?” taunted her sister.

“I don’t want to talk about it.” Evangaline grumbled under her breath about nosy sisters and interfering mothers as she grabbed the hanger with the pink monstrosity they expected her to wear and headed for the changing rooms.

She stripped out of her clothes and stood in her bra and panties, scowling at the frilly bridesmaid gown. Knowing she was only delaying the inevitable, she struggled to get into the dress, the filmy layers battling her at every chance. When she finally had it on, she reached and strained, but to no avail. She couldn’t do up the zipper at her back

“Evangaline,” called her mother. “What is taking you so long?”

“I can’t do up the stupid zipper,” she shouted back.

She heard the curtain behind her rustle as someone stepped in, but the electric shock that ran through her at the touch of the calloused fingers at her back let her know it wasn’t her mother or sister in there with her.

Whirling, she gaped at Ryker, not really surprised to see him. Her body had instantly known, and honestly, she’d expected him to find her before this.

“What are you doing here?” she hissed even as a tingling awareness ran through her body.

“Well, you’ve avoided all my calls, so I called your mother, who was most helpful in letting me know where you’d be today.”

“You need to leave now.” Evangaline felt her heart rate speeding up. It had been two days since their last encounter and as if absence made the body hornier, her knees grew weak and heat suffused her body, especially in the damp spot between her legs.

“I am not going anywhere. As soon as this dress fitting is done, you and I are sitting down and hashing out our plan.”

“And if I say no?” Evangaline didn’t have it in her to cave so easily.

“Then I do this.” Before she could move, his hands were on her waist and lifting her up. She should have protested, kicked him in the jewels, done something, but all she could do—and really wanted to do—was close her eyes and tilt her head up towards his.

His hard lips crushing hers did not disappoint. He kissed her with an urgency and passion that matched her own sexual frustration. Under his questing tongue, she parted her lips, eagerly meeting his sensuous thrusts with slippery stabs of her own.

His hands held her tightly and effortlessly off the floor, making her mouth all too easy to plunder. She clutched at his muscled shoulders, wanting to tear the fabric that stood between her and the hot flesh that lay beneath.

“Evangaline, hasn’t your man helped you zip up yet? What are you two doing?” Her mother’s shrill voice acted like a cold bucket of water. Evangaline froze in Ryker’s embrace. With a sigh, he set her down.

She stumbled back, trying to regain equilibrium, his body temptingly close, but the bench behind her made her stumble, and she sat down hard on its surface.

Befuddled and aroused, she looked up at his enigmatic face with its hooded eyes and licked her lips. With a soft curse, he dropped to his knees in front of her.

“Listen. Finish your dress fitting and meet me outside. Okay?”

She just silently nodded and watched, as with one last cocky smile he left through

the curtain.

*What am I going to do about him? I've never wanted a man like this. I turn positively stupid when he's around. Figures the one man who makes me lose my wits is an obnoxious shifter.*

When Evangaline knew she could stand without collapsing in a puddle on the floor—that man packed a whopper of a kiss—she exited the change room and immediately faced her smirking sister.

“You’re right,” Isobel said. “He is too hot for his own good.”

*Yes, he is, and I want to burn up in his embrace.*

\* \* \* \*

Ryker sat in the coffee shop across the street from the bridal store, and watched the door. *What the hell just happened?* He’d simply intended to track her down, since she wouldn’t take his calls, and hash out their next plan of action. Instead, at the sight of her looking like a delectable bonbon, he’d kissed her, something both the man and beast had greatly enjoyed. It had taken great will power to walk away; something his beast still hadn’t calmed down about. The big cat paced inside of him, growling.

Ryker didn’t know what to do or think at this point. Fighting his attraction to the witch seemed a lost cause. And honestly, the moments of bliss he’d experienced so far with her made him wonder why he even bothered trying.

*She's not a shifter. Mother will never approve.* But then again, he’d tried doing it his mother’s way before and look how that had turned out? His brothers had done their duty to the clan, why could he not do what his beast—and the man—longed to do?

He’d always been different from his brothers—bigger, more aggressive and a hell of a lot more sarcastic. So why shouldn’t he be different in his choice of a bedmate, too? Sating his desires on her luscious body might put his pacing kitty to rest, not to mention relieve the aching tension in his blue balls.

*That is if I can get her to agree.*

Ryker must have made a noise or winced for the voice of Evangaline’s mother came from in front of him. “Is something wrong, dear? You look like you swallowed something sour?”

Ryker looked up with assessing eyes as the woman who looked like Evangaline’s older sister sat down. *It looks like witches age just as well as shifters do.*

“You’re Evangaline’s mother aren’t you?”

“Yes, my name is Marya Rasputin, but you may call me Mary. So you are the hot man who has my daughter throwing a tantrum?”

Straight and to the point, just like her daughter. Ryker didn’t even try to withhold his grin of masculine pleasure at knowing he had Evangaline in a frenzy. “Funny, I wouldn’t have thought tantrums unusual given what I’ve seen of her.”

Mary laughed. “Yes my Eva can be somewhat controlling and temperamental. She needs a strong man to rein her in. Someone who will not fear her little mood swings.”

“Fear her?” It was Ryker’s turn to laugh. “She’s too cute to be scary.”

His words rendered Mary speechless for a moment, and Ryker had to wonder what idiots his witch had dated in the past. He really needed to kill them for touching her.

“I’m Ryker Pantero, by the way. A shifter, in case you didn’t already know.”

A dark brow arched and she smiled. “A *Pantero*, and I’ll bet you’re an alpha, too.

Interesting. No wonder Eva won't talk about you. She has this misguided notion about species not mixing."

"Funny, I was going to say my clan has that same notion."

Mary stared at him intently. "And will that stop you from pursuing what your beast wants?"

Her words startled him. "How do you know about what my beast wants?"

"I am Rasputin's daughter, I know many things. But you did not answer my question. Will you claim my daughter?"

His beast stirred and snarled a reply, a reply he echoed. "Yes." Funny, he hadn't even known his answer until he spoke it aloud.

"And if she says no?"

Ryker turned from the window, the one he kept peering through so he'd catch his witch when she emerged from the salon. He regarded the woman with the odd questions. "Then I will ... convince her." Even if he had to tie her down and tongue her until she screamed Yes.

Satisfied finally, Mary nodded her head and smiled. "So be it. Now you'd better hurry before she runs off on you again."

A quick look out the window showed his witch looking up and down the street, her lower lip clamped between her pearly teeth. With a quick "Bye," Ryker dashed outside and hailed Evangaline. She looked up with a look of such erotic longing he, the graceful one in the clan, almost stumbled.

His beast just chuffed—*Mine*.

\* \* \* \*

"Listen, is there somewhere we can go and talk?"

She could hear his unspoken word, in private. And lucky him, she'd made a decision inside the dress shop, one that would see them naked and doing the horizontal tango in less than ten minutes if he made all the lights between here and her place. *Why fight what my body wants? It's not as if I love him or something. It's just sex.*

"Let's go to my apartment."

The words had no sooner left her mouth than they were flying through the streets, his bike weaving among the cars in a dangerous dance that exhilarated her.

She sat behind him with her arms wrapped tight around his torso, her lips brushing the tasty skin of neck, an action that had him growling, "You'll get us both killed." With that kind of warning, she latched onto his skin, sucking him as he cranked up the speed in a deadly race to get them to her place.

Once there, she led the way up the stairs to her third floor apartment, his electric presence behind her enough to make her legs weak and soak her panties with desire.

"Dammit, witch, move faster, or I'm going to take you on these damn stairs."

Startled, she whirled to face him, only to find herself swept up into a brawny pair of arms and jogged up the rest of the stairs. His macho man act enabled her to start nibbling the skin along the side of his jaw. She quite enjoyed the little growls he emitted at each nip of her teeth.

"Keys?" he said sounding pained in front of her door. Evangaline waved her hand at her door, which with a few clicks, swung open.

"Nice trick," he said striding in. She used her magic to push the door closed, and just

in time, too, for she lost all reason when his lips came down hard over hers, the force and passion behind his embrace overwhelming in its intensity and highly pleasurable. He unhooked his arm from under her knees and let her legs down. Evangaline pressed herself up against his hard length, moaning into his mouth at the electric feel. Pushing her up against the wall, his hands tugged at her clothes, which took too long in Evangaline's impatient mind. With a whisper of magic, she pulled all the stitches out of their garments and the loose fabric dropped to the floor.

His eyes widened in surprise, but he wasted no time, plastering himself to her, skin to skin. She thanked the muscled arms he wrapped around her, for her whole body swooned in pleasure. She could feel his cock, a hot living beast, throbbing against her belly.

"Do you have a condom?" she panted, frantic with need, but not so far gone as to forget protection. "Shifters can't get diseases."

Evangaline almost swooned with delight, for she already knew their different castes precluded pregnancy. She was also impatient to finally enjoy the sinful pleasure of having a man inside her without a latex barrier.

Their lips locked in a kiss that made her blood run molten through her veins. She wanted him desperately. As if sensing her need, his hands cupped her ass cheeks and squeezed before he lifted her off the floor, pressing her back against the wall. In this position, she could easily feel his thick head pulsing at the entrance to her sex. Naturally, she spread her legs wider, sighing when he probed her with the tip. Slowly, too slowly for her liking, he slid his hard length into her, and Evangaline dug her fingers into the muscles of his shoulder at the sensation. Thick, rigid and long, just like the rest of him. She held off squeezing him for fear she'd come too quickly.

"Wrap your legs around me," he whispered in her ear. He didn't have to tell her twice. She immediately latched her limbs around him tight, which in turn drove him even more deeply into her. She moaned and tensed, her whole body trembling and on the brink.

"Bed?" he asked in a pained voice.

"Too far," she gasped.

He hissed and threw his head back. "I'll make up for this later, I promise." With his fingers gripping her ass cheeks tight, he pumped her tight sheath, long strokes that had her keening and panting. She tried to hold on, to prolong the ecstasy that coursed through her body, but when the tip of his cock found her sweet spot over and over, she lost it. Screaming loudly, she spasmed around his hard length, a move that had him yelling and shooting fiery liquid inside of her.

Even after all that, he still held her up, his muscles more than just pretty to look at. Evangaline shuddered in pleasure. *Fuck, how can I still want him when I just had him?*

\* \* \* \*

Ryker tightened his hold on his little witch when she shuddered, sending a jolt of pure desire right through him. Unbelievably, he could feel himself growing hard again, but *this* time he wanted to find a bed.

Her soft ass cheeks felt so right in his hands, and he squeezed them as he carried her away from the wall where he'd just taken her like a rutting animal in heat. Of course, he hadn't heard her complaining. On the contrary, she'd reacted to his passion with even

more fervor than he'd ever seen from a woman.

*Fuck, is she hot.*

He followed the wave of her hand into a bedroom that he didn't even bother to look at. Who cared about the decor, all he wanted was the big bed in the middle of it. Not letting their bodies separate, he laid her on her back on the bed, his ever-hardening cock still nestled inside her moistness.

She looked up at him inquisitively, and with a cat's smile, licked her lips.

"Witch, you are some kind of naughty."

"And the problem is...?" she asked coyly, lifting her arms above her head, drawing attention to her bountiful tits.

"I love naughty," he said before dipping his head to take one of her tempting pink nipples into his mouth.

Her fingers immediately twined in his hair and she arched her back, offering her breast up to his mouth.

*Ring! Ring! Ring!*

He could tell she wanted to ignore it. She had her eyes clamped tight.

*Ring! Ring! Ring!*

Distracted, he pulled his mouth away from her nub and said, "Don't you have voicemail?"

"Yes," she replied through gritted teeth. "But the fact it's not picking up means someone is doing it on purpose to get my attention."

Ryker sighed and rolled off the bed, the sight of her naked splendor enough to make him want to throttle the caller.

Of course, the ringing phone did give him a great view of his shapely witch as she came up off the bed, her creamy flesh inviting as she stalked out to her living room. He swallowed hard as he finally got a good glimpse of her shapely ass.

*Now there's an ass I can't wait to slap my body up against.* With an erection he could have hung a flag on, he followed her out to her living room area and suppressed a grin when she touched a glowing orb and snapped, "This better be good."

"My dear Miss Rasputin, so nice to hear your dulcet tones. I was returning your call as requested. Is this a bad time?"

Ryker could hear the suppressed mirth in Rumpelstiltskin's voice as he baited Evangaline. Judging by the static lifting her hair, she could hear it as well, and her tone when she replied would have frozen even the hardiest of arctic creatures.

"You lied to me about your ex-wife, Rumpel," she said not even deigning to use his full name, still annoyed with him. "Now, you do realize this will mean an increase in my fee?"

"Now, Evangaline, it was an honest mistake. The threat I received was vague and I naturally assumed it had to be Heidi. I realize now the error of that assumption. I will of course increase your fee, especially in light of the new information I've received."

"What new info is that?" asked Ryker, speaking up.

"Oh, I see your partner in this task is there as well. How *delightful*."

"Get to the point would you?" snarled Evangaline. "The wedding is in a few days in case you hadn't noticed. I don't have time to play your stupid games."

"You really know how to suck all the fun out of things," said Rumpelstiltskin, sounding disgruntled. "Fine. You need to speak to the vampires. I assume you know

where their coven is hidden?”

Who didn't? For a race that purported it wanted to be left alone, very few people were ignorant of their lair. But then again, why leave home for take-out, when they could get delivery?

“You'd better not be fucking with us again, Rumpel.”

“Would I do that?” asked the gnome in a tone meant to sound hurt. “Try not to let them suck the life out of you.” With a cackle at his own jest, Rumpelstiltskin hung up.

Ryker paced her living room, mentally planning their next move. One did not go into a vamp lair without preparation.

“If we're going to visit with vamps, I need to hit my place.”

“What for?” she asked still frowning at her orb.

“If we're gonna make nice with blood suckers then we need to impress them. I have an idea. You coming?” he asked.

“I wish,” she said sounding so forlorn. Ryker caught her sexual innuendo and for a moment debated saying “Fuck Rumpel” so he could fuck his witch, but then common sense—and an image of all the zeros—brought him back to his senses.

He also noted they didn't need to leave right this second.

“We have a bit of time,” he said with a wicked smile.

“We really should be prepping for the vamps.”

Instead of wasting time arguing, he just picked her up fireman style and went off to find her bathroom. When the water ran piping hot, he stepped into the shower with her and set her down. She looked up at him and smiled.

“I am really starting to *like* the way you think shifter. *Multi*-tasking. Nice, *very* nice.”

With a grin, he grabbed the soap and ran it over her luscious body, loving her hourglass curves. The feel of her silky smooth skin as he ran his soapy hands over her made him harder than a rock. He stroked her full breasts, rolling her nipples until they hardened, then slid a hand between her thighs to stroke her slick folds.

He dropped to his knees in the tub, his face inches from her curls. Hearing her gasp, he looked up and felt a surge of lust roar through him as he saw her gazing down at him, her green eyes glowing with desire.

“Lick me, Ryker.”

He almost came at her bold words and his inner cat roared. “Oh, my little *heksen*, I am going to make you scream.”

He spread her willing thighs and buried his face into the part of her that smelt so decadently woman—and delicious. Her plump lips parted before his tongue and fingers, her moist core tasting so sweet. He lapped at her, his mouth unerringly finding her clitoris and sucking it.

She almost tore his hair out by the roots, caught up in the pleasure he gave her. He had to grip her plush ass cheeks to hold her steady as she gyrated and trembled under his oral assault. Tonguing her, he could feel her inner muscles starting to quiver and he knew she was ready to come for him. Both he and his cat growled in satisfaction—*mine*.

Ryker stood up and turned her around. He placed his hand in the middle of her back and pushed to bend her over. She complied, exposing her pink pussy to him and providing a target for his cock, which drove into her welcoming wetness. She braced her hands on the shower wall and let out a cry which turned into a scream of pleasure.

Ryker reached a hand forward and curved it under her body to find her sweet spot.

He rubbed it with one calloused finger while softly pumping her, the gripping feel of her pelvic muscles making him tremble. *I have to hold on until she comes first.* Thankfully, his stroking proved too much for her to handle. With another scream, she shattered around his cock, her slick muscles squeezing him tightly. Grabbing her waist with both of his hands, he pounded her. Her soft backside fit perfectly into the hollow of his groin, a soft cushion for the pushing that made him lose control, his strokes coming hard and fast, driving like a piston inside of her wetness.

It did not escape him, even amidst the loss of his control, that she took what he gave and whimpered for more.

More? His sweet *heksen* wanted more. *She is so fucking made for me.*

His beast mistook his mental euphoria as assent and took control. Long canines descended into his mouth. Before he could say bad kitty, he'd pulled her upper body partially up and leaning forward, he clamped his teeth down on the nape of her neck.

As he tasted the metallic fluid that signaled he'd broken her skin, she went rigid. With a long scream of his name, she came around his shaft a second time. A gushing, scalding wetness soaked his prick buried deep inside of her. He came wildly, his cock spurting jet after jet of cream into her. His whole body shuddered with the force of his release. Slowly, his mouth let go of her skin, the round mark of his teeth, vividly apparent on her.

*Oops.*

He knew he should feel bad about marking, after all, he hadn't asked her first. However, knowing the answer—No—he figured he'd explain what the mark meant later. For now, he'd have to content himself with knowing she belonged to him, a fact that made his cat finally curl up with a satisfied sound to sleep.

As if the force of their coupling had taken their voices, they quietly finished washing. She stepped out and wrapped a fluffy towel around her body. Watching her walk out of the bathroom, he found himself stunned at the possessive—and scary—feelings he felt developing for her. *Feelings I'd better not mention to her or she'll just think of something insulting to say.*

She was so damned cute that way.



## Chapter Six

“If we’ve got to hit your place, then we’re taking my car,” Evangaline said, dangling some keys.

Ryker took in her appearance and apparently lost his voice for he kept staring, speechless. And, judging by the bulge in his pants, Evangaline had achieved her desired look—pretty damned hot. Knowing her glamor would be useless around the vamps, she’d had to dress with care. Drawing attention to her lush curves, she’d put on a long black skirt with slits on the sides that came up obscenely high. She’d constricted her breasts in a tight black corset with a cleavage deep enough it seemed bottomless. Stiletto heels for extra height and darkly kholed eyes completed her look. Evangaline’s desire coursed through her body at Ryker’s expression. He watched her like a cat would a mouse—hungrily.

Of course, he didn’t look as yummy wearing an old boyfriend’s track pants and t-shirt that were a few sizes too small. However, even dressed like an idiot, he exuded maleness.

“Stop that,” he growled.

“What?” she purred back, her movements fluid as liquid silver as she sidled up to him.

“I can smell your arousal.” He closed his eyes and clenched his fists at his side. “So sweet.”

Evangaline’s eyelids grew heavy, as her body flushed with passion. “Taste me.”

“Dammit, witch.” He strode away from her, the tent in his pants surely painful, given the way the fabric stretched.

Evangaline laughed huskily. “Come my big kitty. Let’s get you ready to play with some vamps.”

She strutted past him, only letting out a small squeal when his hand slapped her ass. Rubbing her stinging posterior, she flashed him a dirty look. He responded to with a grin.

He insisted on driving and she let him. *I would never admit this aloud, but I could watch him all day.* Besides, he knew how to handle a motorized vehicle much better than she did. She preferred traveling by broom—or more recently, plastered to the back of a hunk.

Her panties got a little damper and he growled.

Evangaline chuckled. *Damn, I should have fucked him the first night we met. For the first time in a long time, I’ll admit I’m having fun.*

The large house with the hedged-in yard whose driveway he pulled into didn’t surprise her, but the tiny woman who opened the door did. Evangaline’s nails dug into Ryker’s arm, but instead of looking pissed, the jerk smiled.

“It’s not what you think, witch. Ma, what are *you* doing here?”

Evangaline looked at the tiny woman who’d birthed the giant beside her and hoped they’d given her lots of drugs, because that had to have hurt.

“I was worried about you. Besides, isn’t a mother allowed to visit her son?” asked his mother snidely.

Evangaline released Ryker’s arm so he could enfold his mother in a big hug. After a

bone crushing embrace, he turned and gestured to Evangaline. “Ma, I’d like you to meet a friend of mine. This is Evangaline. Evangaline, my mother, Aneka.”

Aneka smiled at her, but Evangaline noticed it didn’t reach her eyes, but then again, neither did her own smile. “A pleasure to meet you ma’am,” said Evangaline.

“Please call me Aneka. Now come inside. I have just made some coffee.” Aneka turned and walked into the house as if she owned it, but Ryker made no move to follow.

“Fuck. Fuck. Fuck.” He chanted the word like it would help.

Evangaline nudged Ryker in the ribs and whispered up to him naughtily, “Yes, I’d like to, but it might be kind of weird with your mother inside.”

Startled, he smiled down at her ruefully. “My mother being here is not good.”

“Why? She doesn’t look like she could hurt a fly.”

“My mother is much tougher than she looks. Just watch yourself around her. When she gets into one of her moods, she can be quite nasty.”

*Well, so can I.* Although for the sake of the wicked sex with Ryker, she’d make an effort to be—*gag*—nice.

Bracing herself for the inevitable confrontation, Evangaline walked into the ring—er house.

If she cared about other people, she might have paid attention to the interior of the house that screamed a man-lives-here, but since she highly doubted the wood paneled finishes and scratched hardwood floors had anything to do with his sexual prowess, she couldn’t care less. Although she did almost smile at the cute picture of him as a kid with no front teeth.

As if he knew exactly where she looked, he said over his shoulder. “That picture was taken after my first fight with a bear shifter at school. I raked in a ton of dough with the tooth fairy that night.”

“I take it you won?”

Aneka’s snort said it all.

They entered a kitchen dressed in wooden cabinets and stainless steel appliances. Aneka immediately began grabbing mugs from the cabinet and preparing coffee to go round.

Evangaline watched with entertainment as Ryker’s mother tried very hard not to slam every item down on the counter. *Someone’s in a mood and I’ll bet I’m the cause. How fun.*

Ryker’s forehead creased as he watched his mother.

“You’d better get ready,” said Evangaline capable of fighting her own battles. “Your mother and I will be fine.”

With a smile as false as her own, if with a *lot* more teeth, Aneka agreed. “Go son. Your *friend* and I will get to know each other.”

“No blood,” he said, walking out shaking his head.

“All right, spit it out,” said Evangaline, looking Aneka in the eye, not one to dance around.

“You will stay away from my son,” said Aneka her eyes hard and uncompromising.

“Why would I do that?” asked Evangaline perching herself on a stool.

“I can smell your filthy magic, witch. I will not have my boy tainted by your kind.”

Evangaline rolled her eyes. “Oh, please. My magic doesn’t work on him and you know it. Not to mention the whole interspecies thing means no babies. So why don’t you

just butt out. Ryker and I are just having fun. Big fucking deal.”

Aneka’s eyes narrowed and she gave a nasty chuckle. “Witch, you don’t know who you’re messing with.” Aneka’s form wavered from petite woman to that of a large striped cat with very, big teeth.

*Oh, how juvenile.* Evangaline yawned. “I really hope you’ve got more than that.” Narrowing her own eyes, Evangaline smiled coldly even as she formed a bubble around Aneka and sucked the air out of it. Evangaline almost giggled at the beauty of it. *I love that granddad taught me to think outside the box. Like using indirect magic against shifters, beautifully effective.*

Standing in front of the gasping woman, Evangaline shook her head. “Let’s get one thing straight here. I like your son. I know, hard to believe. Trust me, I have a hard time believing it myself. Now, while I like him, I can guarantee no one will hurt or fuck with him, or if they do, it won’t be something they’ll live to tell. Now you might be his mommy, which means by default I have to keep you out of a coffin, but—” Evangaline leaned closer to the airless vacuum she’d created and met the bulging eyes of Ryker’s mother. “You will not fuck with me or insult me. At least not to my face. Do we *understand* each other?”

A begrudging nod from Aneka and Evangaline dropped the bubble.

For a second, a gleam of admiration entered Aneka’s eye. “It’s a pity you weren’t born a shifter.”

“But then we wouldn’t be having this wonderful time getting to know each other,” said Evangaline sweetly as Ryker walked in holding a large studded collar.

Ryker, being a male, seemed oblivious to the undercurrents, which suited Evangaline just fine. After all, he might not be very keen to know Evangaline had kind of choked his mother.

“What the hell is that for?” asked Evangaline wondering if it had matching cuffs. The things she could do with him spread eagle...

Ryker growled softly and with a squeak, Aneka said, “I think I’d better leave. Yes, I, um, need to go do something, elsewhere.”

Evangaline didn’t even notice Ryker’s mother leave. She only had eyes for the big man stalking towards her, his eyes wavering between his intense blue and the golden that meant he was aroused.

“So who won the fight?” he asked.

Evangaline smiled and licked her lips at the naughty gleam in his eye. “Would you believe we came to a mutual *understanding*?”

He let out a bark of laughter that turned into a strangled moan when she rubbed up against him and cupped his groin.

“Now that I’ve passed the mommy test, do I get a prize?”

“I swear witch, after we’re done our meeting with the vamps, I am going to pleasure you until you can’t move.”

“Promise?” she whispered with a wickedly sensual smile.

His hard kiss left her in little doubt he meant what he said.

*I can’t wait.*

## Chapter Seven

As Ryker padded alongside Evangaline in the form of his beast—a large, black, deadly panther—he thought over her reaction to his change of form back at his place.

He'd outlined his plan to accompany her in his beast form.

"So you want go as my black cat? Like a witch's familiar?" she'd said tapping her chin back at his place. "I like it." Then she'd looked at him expectantly.

A part of him had wanted to shy from her keen eyes—*how will she react to my changing in front of her*—but his witch had guts. If any woman could handle it, she could. Shedding his clothes, he'd stood in front of her naked and erect. He just couldn't help himself around her. With an ability only natural born alphas had, he'd coaxed his beast into taking over. It had needed little urging, and with a roar, the beast took over, his human form suddenly sprouting the fur, structure and musculature of a jungle cat, all in the blink of an eye.

Evangaline said not a word, but her green eyes had opened wide in her face. Then she'd smiled. "Fucking fantastic. And look at you. What a big beautiful kitty you are." To the man's disgust, but the panther's glee, she'd proceeded to rub his head, especially around the ears and soon had his beast purring in delight.

Trust his witch to treat a dangerous predator like an overgrown house pet.

Once again, she'd passed yet another test, proving once again just how rightly his beast had chosen. *My mate*. The words didn't seem so shocking anymore, on the contrary a sense of rightness and possessiveness suffused them. *The only problem will be making her accept it. My lovemaking is one thing, somehow I don't think she'll handle the whole, I'm yours-for-life issue as well.*

She'd giggled for some reason when she'd placed the big black collar around his neck. Studded with gems and metal, it served as a prop to make them look more imposing.

She had driven them in her car, an experience he never wanted to repeat. She truly lived up to her reputation as a menace to society in so many ways.

An hour's drive with traffic, a few broken speed laws, and just past twilight, they found themselves outside of the city and in front of the large mansion that housed the vamps for the area. Awash in lights, the house lit up the encroaching gloom while strange howls and gibbering laughter, announced their presence.

The one problem with Ryker being in kitty form was his inability to speak to Evangaline. He had to trust—that word almost made him cough up a hairball—that she had a plan. If not, he'd have to let his kitty play. Something that might happen anyway given vamps were notorious seducers, a thought that made his fur bristle. *Mine*.

Evangaline strutted in her heels and slitted skirt—*mmm creamy white thighs*—up the steps to the double front door. Without an ounce of fear—on the contrary, he could smell the anticipation emanating from her—she banged the metal knocker in the shape of a demon's head.

The eyes of the carving opened, their ruby red glow baleful. Its metallic lips curved into a sardonic smile when it said. "What do ye want, witch?"

"I'm here to speak to the coven leader."

"Is he expecting you?" asked the demonic face.

"I knocked out of courtesy and now you're pissing me off. Let me in before I get *really* annoyed, you animated piece of scrap metal." Not an ounce of feeling colored her words, but the threat, and the fact she would not hesitate to act, came through loud and clear.

"There's no need to be nasty," sulked the doorknocker before the door swung open with a theatrical squeak.

"Come along, kitty," she said, and holding her head imperially high, she strode into the bloodsuckers' lair.

*Damn, she's got guts.* He thanked the fact his cat had control over its sexual urges for he knew if he'd seen her like this as a man, he would have pressed her up against the wall and melted the regal ice she had encased herself in.

Ryker followed behind her, his nose, keener in this form, scenting the air and the flavors that imbued it. *Dust, decay, undead thing. Ooh, yummy, a bleeding living thing.* Nothing surprising for a house full of vamps.

Unerringly, his witch strode into the vacant seeming mansion, her heels clacking on the marble entrance floor. She seemed to know where she wanted to go and never paused or slowed down her pace even as she approached a pair of closed wooden doors. With a fling of her hand and a rush of power he could feel along his heightened senses, she flung the doors open for their grand entrance.

The sudden stench of vamps wafted out and Ryker's beast bared its teeth. *Fuck me, there are a lot of them.* His witch seemed not to notice, though. She entered the ballroom with the grace and confidence of a queen, looking neither left nor right at the ranks of undead that lined the walls. The sound of her heels echoed loudly as the congregation of vamps fell silent, their dark eyes following her path to the throne at the far end.

Ryker's head swung from side to side, his large canines visible and menacing. He didn't like the fact that so many vampires were gathered. His reports had not mentioned that this coven had grown so large.

When Evangaline stopped in front the throne, the silence hung thick. A pin dropping would have sounded like a bomb.

Nobody said a word, the battle of wills had begun.

The vamp on the throne straightened from his slouch. Platinum haired, with pale aristocratic features that some might have called handsome, he surveyed them, or more specifically, Evangaline. Ryker definitely didn't like the interest that lit his expression as he looked her up and down.

"Miss Rasputin, what a delight to finally meet you," said the vamp, speaking with only the faintest hint of an accent.

"Let's hope you still feel that way in a few minutes, Mr. Delacroix."

"Pierre, please. And may I call you Evangaline?" Pierre smiled at her winsomely.

"No, you may not. My name is Ms. Rasputin to you."

Her answer took the vamp aback, but he recovered quickly and smiled again showing off his small pointed canines. *Bah, those aren't teeth. I should show him mine.* Pierre's dark eyes flicked over to Ryker in his feline form and he raised an aristocratic brow. "My, what a big pussy you have."

"You know what they say, the bigger the better."

Had Ryker been in human form he would have probably choked with laughter. His

beast chuffed in amusement, especially at the uncertain look on the vamp's face. Unsettled, he didn't reply, but his eyes began to swirl and now Ryker finally growled. *The fucker is trying to mesmerize her.*

Evangeline's laughter rang out. "Oh, Pierre, you really *are* new aren't you? Did no one warn you that your mind tricks won't work on me? My grandfather taught me well." Her voice turned hard and the air grew thick as she drew power into herself. "I am already tired of your games. You will answer a few questions, truthfully of course, and then my cat and I will be on our way. Don't answer and you will annoy me. You really *don't* want to do that."

Pierre's pale face clenched with anger. "You presume much, witch. Even if my mind tricks don't work, I do happen to outnumber you."

Evangeline looked around disdainfully. "Yes, I see you've got visitors in for the wedding. But, I know something you don't," she said, turning back to Pierre with a smirk. The power she held making her eyes glow blacker than the vamp's.

"Really, and what would that be?" said the head vamp with more confidence now that he'd found his balls again in the realization he held the numbers.

"None of these vamps will come to your aid when I rip your tongue out and shove it down your throat."

Ryker restrained himself from shaking his head at her outspoken manner. His witch certainly hadn't learned diplomacy growing up, but personally, he liked her style. Why screw around when threats and intimidation tended to work faster—not to mention provided more entertainment.

"Insolent bitch. Bring me her heart!" screamed Pierre. Four vamps behind the throne moved forward at his words and then halted indecisively. The undead lining the walls of the room watched the unfolding action with interest, but not a one moved to do Pierre's bidding.

Standing up from his throne, Pierre glared out at his court. "Why do none of you come? I gave an order."

A vamp with parchment thin skin that indicated his advanced age, shook his head and answered. "We will not start a war with the Rasputin family. I would suggest you just answer the witch's questions."

Pierre did not heed the words of the elder bloodsucker and Ryker almost snorted in disbelief, for he could see by the tautness of Pierre's body language he had no intention of backing down.

*Fine with me. My beast could use a light workout.*

\* \* \* \*

Evangeline almost laughed when Pierre stupidly gestured for his bodyguards to attack her. Before she had time to take care of them though, her big black panther sprang forth with sharp, glistening canines.

*My, what big teeth he has.* Having never had someone come to her aid before, Evangeline, stood back and decided to enjoy the show. And Ryker didn't disappoint.

With a savage snarl, Ryker sprang at the vamp nearest her and knocked it flat. Large claws on massive paws dug into the downed dead one and the big head swung left and right, quickly gauging the position of the other three. The vamps circled the black cat and their fallen comrade, hissing with their tiny pointed teeth.

Evangeline giggled. After all, did they really think those puny incisors would intimidate *her* big kitty? Ryker with a quick slice across the throat of the vamp he stood on—*ruthless, I like that*—coiled his powerful hind legs and jumped at his next victim. Chomp. Another vamp went down.

Ryker's tail swished from side to side in excitement as he contemplated the next in line. With a cry of, "Fuck this", the last two vamps fled.

Ryker padded back to sit at Evangeline's side, and calmly licked his chops. Evangeline had quite enjoyed watching him in action, his feline grace and power while in his beast form explaining the attributes she so enjoyed of him as a man.

Evangeline, with a broad smile for Pierre, who had watched in morbid fascination, reached down—not far because damn as a beast he was big—and scratched the fur behind Ryker's ears. "Good kitty."

A rumbling purr that closely resembled the motor on a '67 Chevy almost startled her, but she managed to hide her reaction.

Pierre didn't and visibly flinched. If it was possible for a vampire to turn white, then he did, his dead skin turning even paler than before and widening Evangeline's grin.

"Are we willing to be more amenable now Pierre?" she asked sweetly.

"Ask your questions and be gone," Pierre said no longer sounding so cocky.

"What is your involvement in the plan to kidnap Rumpelstiltskin's daughter?"

"None."

Evangeline noticed the flicker in his eyes. "You lie," she stated calmly. "I don't ... like liars."

When Pierre looked like he would retort, Ryker growled and stood, the fur on his back bristling.

Swallowing, Pierre couldn't take his eyes from the panther, but he answered. "We are not involved, but we were approached."

"By whom?"

"We asked, but the messenger we were sent was under a mind compulsion and could tell us nothing about who had sent him."

"Where is this messenger? I'd like to speak to him."

Pierre's lips curved into a smile. "We ate him."

"You're very lucky you didn't get food poisoning," she said wiping the smile off Pierre's face. "It's what I would have done. So what did this messenger ask you? I want to hear the request word for word."

"He didn't say much. He showed up at our door a few nights ago and asked to speak with the head vampire. We made him wait for a while before letting him in to talk with me. His exact words were, 'kidnap the trickster's daughter and gain a boon for your coven.' I said, 'not fucking likely,' and after that, not a word did the man speak. I admit we found this most disconcerting when we ate him for we are used to the screams of our victims."

"Didn't he have an ID on him? What did he drive?" These continual dead ends on the case were really starting to piss her off.

"A taxi dropped him off and he had nothing on him—no wallet, identification, nothing."

"Well this was a complete waste of my time," she grumbled, turning on her heel. Not glancing at the vamps who eyed her exit with interest, she clacked her way to the front

hall, her big black kitty at her heels. She strode from the undead lair, pausing only for a moment when she hit the rich scent of the night. She closed her eyes for a second and breathed deep. *Disgusting creatures. And to think humans find them appealing.*

Personally, she found herself preferring the vitality and strength of a beast. Well, not just any beast—Ryker.

Opening the passenger door so he could leap in, she clambered into the driver's side and slammed the car into gear, annoyed at the time they'd wasted coming here. She'd only driven a small ways from the house when with barely a shiver, Ryker reverted back to his male self. Make that his very male and naked self.

Swerving back onto the road, she averted her eyes to the blacktop in front of her. *Apparently I still haven't lost my fascination with his body.* A body whose nude flesh sat temptingly close.

"Pull over," he growled when the car lurched yet again.

Not bothering to argue, for truly, driving was not her forte, she pulled over onto the side of the road. But instead of opening her car door, she gave into desire. Turning sideways, she grabbed his face and kissed him, her hot tongue licking the seam of his lips and parting them to duel with his waiting organ. Eagerly, his hands pulled her onto his lap, the hardness of his erection poking her bottom.

They kissed fiercely, their hands grasping and rubbing the parts they could reach in their sitting position.

"Straddle me," he whispered.

Thanking the slits on her skirt and the bucket seats in her car, Evangaline turned on his lap and placed her knees on either side of his thighs. Her moist core, covered only in a thin scrap of silk, rubbed against his throbbing cock.

"Good, little witch. You're ready for me I see." With rough fingers, he tore the panties from her, placing her aching sex directly against his shaft. He reached down and with a thumb, stroked her clit, making her go wet and wild with need.

"Fuck me," she moaned.

She liked that he didn't make her ask twice. He simply lifted her high enough to sheathe his prick inside her, its hard length filling her up, deeper and deeper. *It is all about the size,* she thought, sighing at the feel of him stretching her.

With his hands on her waist and her fingers digging into his shoulders, she rode his cock, the close confines of the car making it tight, but exciting. The sound of slapping flesh and panting breaths filled the car, the shock absorbers of the vehicle absorbing some of the impact.

When his mouth licked hotly at her neck and bit her gently, pinching the skin, she screamed. Her orgasm hit her fast and hard, a pleasurable explosion that left her dizzy and soft in his arms. As if her orgasm was the catalyst he'd waited for, she felt him come inside her.

They sat there regaining their breath, his arms wrapped around her body when she felt his lips brushing the top of her head and temple, so gentle and caring. She liked it enough she didn't push him away. *What is happening to me? Since when do I cuddle after sex?*

*And why does it feel so right?*

\* \* \* \*



Ryker held in a sigh, not surprised when Evangaline scrambled off him. Her prickly exterior made it predictable, even. What had surprised him was her diving on him all hot and horny like that in the first place. Mind, he'd quite enjoyed it. Judging by her swollen lips, and her attitude, so had she and it pissed her off.

*My little heksen doesn't like feeling dependent on anyone.*

Ryker grabbed his clothes off the back seat and got out of the car to dress. By the time he got around to the other side and opened the door to get in, she'd already scooted over to the passenger side, her face turned out the side window in an attempt to ignore him.

Not bloody likely.

Throwing the car into drive, he spun the tires on the gravel and shot out onto the road. Once they were on their way back to his place, he laid a heavy hand on her thigh and squeezed it.

"You did well back there," he said.

"Thank you," she replied, then to his shock, she laid her hand on top of his. "Your beast put on quite the show."

His kitty chuffed in his mind. "He was trying to impress you."

"Oh, he did."

Ryker squeezed her leg through the material of her skirt. The hand she'd rested on top, grabbed his hand and lifted it. He expected her to fling it off, but instead, she pulled her skirt aside and placed his hand on the bare skin of her thigh. Startled, he looked over at her.

"I might not like you, shifter, but I won't deny you're a fantastic fuck."

With those romantic words, the car got pulled over again, and placing her outside on the hood of the car for more room, first he licked her until she cried out his name, then he fucked her until she called him her god.

*Mine, oh mine*, he thought possessively.

## Chapter Eight

Evangelina woke in a strange bed, alone. Sitting up, she looked around. Decorated in earth tone colors, the room screamed man cave, from the blocky wooden furniture to the plaid comforter—not to mention the big ass TV on the wall at the foot of the bed.

*Ryker's room.* She vaguely remembered coming back here last night. She'd fallen asleep in the car, a fact that surprised her as she never slept around people. It made her too vulnerable. Yet sleep in Ryker's presence she had, and she didn't even protest when he carried her to bed and then spooned her.

Evangelina lay back on the bed and groaned. *Oh my god, we slept together, spooning like a couple.* It might sound odd, but with all the boyfriends she'd had, she'd never spent the night, well not asleep, anyway, and she'd definitely never cuddled. She tended to be a let's fuck and leave kind of gal.

However, Ryker kept making her break all kinds of rules. *At least I'm not in love and neither is he. This is just good sex. Make that fucking fantastic sex. Nothing more.*

She definitely didn't feel warm and mushy feelings inside when she read the note on the pillow beside her saying he'd gone to get coffee and doughnuts. Nope, that giddy feeling inside? Just hunger.

His bedroom had a bathroom attached to it, and she quickly showered the scent of sex off her skin. She jumped out abruptly when she started thinking about him joining her slick and naked in the shower. She refused to moon over him like some love struck idiot.

With her hair wrapped atop her head in a towel and wearing an oversized t-shirt of Ryker's—which smelled uniquely of him—she wandered out into his home, not realizing she had company until she walked into the kitchen and ran into his mother.

"Are you still here?" asked Evangelina nastily, perching on a stool.

"I'm here to make sure Ryker doesn't do anything stupid," said Aneka, taking in Evangelina's attire with an irritated snort.

"Stupid like getting involved with a witch?" said Evangelina a little too sweetly, enjoying the pinched look Aneka got.

"I don't care if he beds you. I'm just going to make sure he doesn't take you for his mate."

Evangelina sucked in a breath and almost started choking. "Mate? No, you don't have to worry on that account. I have no intention of getting hitched with anyone, least of all a shifter."

"Good. I have bigger plans for my boy. His bride has already been chosen for him, so enjoy the little time you have left with him."

Evangelina found herself consumed with fury. *A bride? For Ryker? Over my dead fucking body.* Evangelina almost said those words out loud. *No, wait a second. Why do I care? He's just a fuck friend. Nothing more.*

"Don't worry, once my sister's wedding and this job are done, we'll have no reason to see each other." Still annoyed at the thought of Ryker with another woman—and of never seeing him again—Evangelina pivoted on the stool.

"What the hell is that on your neck?" Aneka spoke in a low, furiously cold tone.

Evangelina reached fingers to her nape and touched the indents of the mark Ryker

had left when they'd fucked so gloriously in the shower. The man had passion and stamina.

"It's a love bite. What? Haven't you ever seen one?"

Aneka laughed nastily. "You fool. He's *already* marked you for his mate."

Evangaline felt the color leave her face as she turned to face Ryker's mother.

"Excuse me? Say that again."

"When a beast finds its mate, in the throes of sex, he bites her, usually on the back of the neck, marking her as his. Congratulations, you belong to Ryker. Welcome to the family." Aneka said the last with a bitter laugh that left no doubt as to the truth of her words.

Evangaline felt a surge of warmth—*he chose me as his mate?*—quickly followed by rage. *That fucker. He had no right.*

"How do we undo it?" Evangaline asked.

"You can't, *daughter*."

"I'm going to fucking kill him for days," Evangaline muttered darkly.

"Kill who?" asked the object of her ire, striding into the kitchen looking delicious.

"You!" Evangaline screeched, jumping up from the stool. "How dare you make me your mate?"

With a tug on her magic, she encased him in a bubble like she had his mother previously and sucked the air out. Ryker took a step forward and shattered the bubble, her magic evaporating when it came in contact with his body. Stupid smart bastard had figured out the loophole in her trick.

"I didn't do it on purpose or willingly," he shouted back.

Surely, his words hadn't caused the stab of pain that arced through her heart? "Yeah, well, have a good life, because I am not going to be a part of it."

Swiping her car keys from his hand as she dashed past, she tried to evade the hands that reached to grab, but again his size won. Bands of steel wrapped around her and turned her to face him.

"Stop it, Evangaline. What's done is done."

Moisture pooled in her eyes, and aghast that she might actually start to cry in front of him, she did the only thing she could think of to get him to let her go.

She kissed him.

\* \* \* \*

The brimming tears in her eyes made Ryker's heart ache and his beast pace. He knew she didn't yet have the same strong feelings for him that he had for her, but why the tears?

Her lips, so soft against his, trembled, and sensing her vulnerability, he loosened his grip on her and set her feet back on the floor. *She just needs time to get used to the idea.*

The sudden pain on his instep, followed by the excruciating pain in his groin that made him instinctively hunch over, sucked all the coherent thought out of his head. Even amidst his pain though, he heard the slamming of the front door and the gunning of the car.

*Fuck.*

Wheezing and hoping she hadn't done permanent damage to his man parts—he'd need them for later when he caught up to her—he faced his mother with a glare.

“You just *had* to tell her didn’t you?”

“What I’d like to know is why you didn’t tell *me*? I’m your *mother*.”

Ryker pinched the bridge of his nose and admonished his pacing beast to settle down. Much as his mother drove him insane, he still couldn’t eat her. “I didn’t tell you, or her, because I was waiting for the right moment. *Say in a few years when she wouldn’t have freaked!*” He shouted the last, annoyed with his mother but even more annoyed with himself. *Did she leave crying because she’s confused and has feelings or does she truly hate me and never want to see me again?*

“You care for her don’t you,” said his mother quietly.

“Of course I do. She’s my mate.”

“Your animal is one thing. I’m talking about *you*, the man. You feel for her.”

Ryker thought about it for a moment before replying. “She’s not scared of me, Ma. When I get all big and bad, she smiles. She treats my beast like a giant kitty. She’s fearless and beautiful. And...”

“You love her.”

Ryker shook his head. “*No*.”

“What do you think love is?” asked his mother with a wry smile. “Here’s a question for you? Has she left your thoughts since you met?”

He shook his head.

“How do you feel about never seeing her again?”

His stomach clenched.

“What will you do if she finds another man?”

The roar that burst forth shocked him, but not his mother.

“Go after her.”

“But she’s pissed.”

“She’s scared because her feelings are frightening her. I don’t think your witch handles emotions well. She’s used to being a loner. Just take it slow with her. And good luck.”

Incredible advice from his mother. Ryker cocked his head and looked at her. “Are you sure you’re okay, Ma? You *do* remember she’s a witch, right? And you’re telling me to go after her.”

“Yeah, it’s a shame about her witch blood. She’d have made a great shifter. Now go, quickly, before she does something stupid.”

Ryker didn’t wait any longer, almost running for the front door and his bike parked in the driveway. But he could have sworn he heard his mother say behind him, almost ruefully, “What a pity they can’t conceive together. The babies they would have made.”

\* \* \* \*

The pounding on her door wouldn’t let up, but Evangaline refused to give in.

“Come on, Evangaline. Can’t we talk about this? It’s not that bad.”

“Oh yeah, what does your fiancée think about it?” Evangaline longed to scalp the unknown woman.

“I don’t have a fiancé,” he said with a heavy sigh.

“Not according to your mother.”

“I can explain. Just open this damned door,” he yelled.

“Bull shit. Trying explaining how you claimed me as your mate without my

permission,” she shouted back.

*Rotten fucking shifter. Marking me like some kind of possession. How barbaric—and hot.* Evangaline hated the warmth that coiled though her at the thought of being *his*. She didn’t need a man. She belonged to herself. So why, oh why, did an annoying girlie part of her long to throw open the door?

She knew the sex would be incredible. Make that mind blowing, especially in their current moods. He’d ride her hard, his thick muscles straining and slick with sweat. Evangaline couldn’t help the wetness that pooled between her legs, but still she wouldn’t give in.

The pounding paused for a minute and in the silence, she could have sworn she heard sniffing. “Open this damn door, witch,” Ryker roared. “I can smell you, and you can’t deny it. You want me.”

Evangaline, though, had stubbornness in droves and, crossing her arms over her chest, she stuck her tongue out at the door in a childish gesture he couldn’t see but she personally enjoyed.

*Crack!*

The doorjamb splintered. The door swung open and, with a heavy thump, hit the wall.

Six foot something of bristling shifter stalked in with glowing golden eyes and the muscles in his torso bulging with tension. Evangaline couldn’t help the jolt of desire that struck like lightning between her thighs and the heaviness that overtook her breasts.

Ryker had a wild look about him, as if he barely had control. “Dammit, Evangaline. Why do you have to be so bloody stubborn? I want you to let me explain, but if you don’t stop looking at me like that, I’m not going to be able to control myself. You drive me fucking wild.”

Her tongue darted out and licked her lips, a motion he caught, and with a groan of surrender, he crushed her to his chest.

“My little *heksen*,” he murmured.

His lips plundered hers, taking and drinking deeply of her like a man parched in the desert. She understood the feeling, for she thirsted for him, too. She soaked in his kiss and opened her mouth wider for more, her limbs wrapping around him sinuously, holding him tight to her body.

He kicked the splintered door shut behind them, and she absently wove some magic to keep it shut, before he carried her to the bedroom and crawled onto the bed with her clinging to him. She knew she should send him away, but her hormones had taken over and they didn’t want to think beyond the pleasure.

Her hands were taken from around his neck and pinned above her head by his in a gesture of dominance that made her gasp. His heavy weight nestled between her thighs and pinned her. Evangaline squirmed and panted. This submissive feeling was new and surprisingly exciting.

Using his lips and teeth, he tugged at the fabric of her shirt; his shirt actually, since she hadn’t had the time—or heart—to change out of it when she got home.

Baring her breasts, he blew on her nipples until they stood erect and begged for attention.

“I’m going to tell you a story, my sweet *heksen*.”

“Can’t it wait?” she groaned, arching her breasts up to his mouth which hovered out

of reach.

He bent his head and bit down on a nipple making her twitch and cry out.

“Quiet, my wild *heksen*, and listen.”

“Why do you keep calling me *heksen*?” she asked.

“It’s Danish for witch. Think of it as a term of endearment.”

“Oh.” She’d never had a lover give her a nickname before; although most of her enemies had, the most common term rhymed with witch.

“Now are you ready to listen?”

“I’d rather you did other things with your mouth,” Evangaline said with a pout.

His tongue laved her nipple, a liquid line of fire that shot right to her groin. “Be a good little witch and you will be rewarded.”

“If this is about the mating thing—”

His lips cut off her protest. “Enough,” he said, his breathing erratic when he came up for air. “Now pay attention. Not too many people know this story, but I’m going to tell you since my mother obviously left out a lot of details when she claimed I was engaged. Vivian, my ex fiancée, was the daughter of my mom’s best friend and our next door neighbor. My mom originally wanted her to marry my older brother, but the age gap of fifteen years was a bit much, so they decided I should be the one instead.”

“And I care because?” Evangaline said sarcastically already hating this Vivian person.

He sucked her breast into his mouth and she writhed under him. “Like I was saying, they arranged a marriage between me and Vivian.”

Realizing he would just keep torturing her if she didn’t listen, she decided to pay attention—for now. And being the multi-tasking type, she started thinking up ways of hurting the girl next door, Vivian. Very painful ways.

\* \* \* \*

“Are arranged marriages common for your kind?” Evangaline asked seeming resigned to listen.

Ryker almost breathed a sigh of relief when she seemed agreeable to hearing his tale even as he grimaced at her question. “Unfortunately, yes.”

Evangaline let out a throaty laugh that made him grind his hips against hers, cutting her laugh short and turning it into a moan. “Oh, how barbaric,” she said breathily.

“I wouldn’t talk. I’ve heard about your virgin witch and Satan ritual. Isn’t that how your sister met her fiancé?”

Evangaline didn’t have to answer, for the blooming color in her cheeks said it all. “So what happened?” she asked.

“Yes, well, being almost seven years older than Vivian, we didn’t really see each other much when she was young. When she did start going to the same school, I was grades ahead of her, not to mention I dropped out at fifteen.”

“Couldn’t control the beast and your hormones at the same time?”

Ryker liked that she hadn’t assumed he was an idiot but had instead jumped to the correct conclusion. “Exactly. As you know, keeping humans ignorant is the number one motto. When I really started noticing girls, so did my beast, and let’s just say he really wanted to come out and play. I didn’t see Vivian much for the next couple of years, and then I moved to the city for work and only went home for holidays. I’d actually pretty

much forgotten about her until she turned eighteen and my mom started bugging me to come home and meet her.”

Seeing his witch’s eyes darken, Ryker dipped his head and circled both her nipples, one at a time with his tongue, until she softened and sighed. Then he continued. “I put it off for over two years, but then my father spoke up, and no one says no to the alpha of the pack.”

“That must have stuck in your craw, taking orders from someone, even your own dad.”

Again, she’d struck the nail on the head. “Noticed my stubborn tendencies, did you? Well, I went back prepared to do my duty to my clan. I shouldn’t have bothered. Vivian was a pussy, literally. She fainted the first time she saw me.”

“I know you’re good looking, but really that’s taking it far.”

The surge of emotion that roared through him at her innocently said words took him by surprise and his beast growled softly—*mine*. Ryker’s lips claimed hers in a heated kiss that left them panting.

“She didn’t faint because I am God’s gift to women. She passed out ‘cause supposedly I scared her.”

“Stupid bitch.”

Evangeline’s heated words warmed him—and from a woman who professed to not care for him. They also dissipated the remaining anger, and yes, shame, he’d felt over Vivian’s reaction. Never mind the other women who had always dropped their panties if he smiled at them, the fact that Vivian had reacted that way had humiliated, and surprisingly enough, hurt him. But still, he’d tried to do his duty by his clan.

“Even given her apparent fear and dislike for me, they forged ahead with the wedding plans.”

“You would have been miserable. Why did no one stop it?” Her green eyes looked up at him and he could see the ire in them, but not directed at him. No, she was angry for him. It felt strange to have someone on his side, but he liked it, a lot.

“They thought she’d get over her fear of me, and as my father told me, so long as I got babes on her, I could always get my pleasure elsewhere.”

The look in Evangeline’s eyes turned dark and dangerous. “Keep in mind, so long as you are in my bed, you will touch no other. I don’t share,” she threatened. Then as if realizing she’d admitted to wanting him still in her bed, she added quickly, “Not that we’ll be together that much longer.”

He bit back a smile. Under the lobe of her ear, his warm breath making her shiver, he purred. “Just so you know, if a man so much as lays a hand on you, I will chew him out—literally.”

Her entire body shuddered under his. “You say the hottest things. And speaking of eating, perhaps you could demonstrate that for me later, or better yet, now.”

That comment almost made him come. His cock jerked like a caged beast in his pants and his inner cat roared—*Mine*! But, he needed to finish his story and get to the point.

“A week before the wedding I got tired of her tears and avoidance, so I decided to confront her.” What a mistake that turned out to be—and a blessing in disguise. “She told me I disgusted her. That I was a savage beast and if she had her way, she’d never marry me. So I walked.” And the shit had hit the fucking fan after. He and his father were

currently not on speaking terms, and his mother kept trying to make excuses for Vivian. However, since meeting Evangaline, Ryker had learned one thing. He and Vivian would never have worked even had he not scared her. His reaction, and that of his beast, made it clear. Only one woman could ever satisfy him—Evangaline. He loved everything about her from her feisty attitude to her cute, freckled nose. He even loved the way she showed no fear and gave as good as she got. Of course, he still had to convince her she felt the same way. She seemed to have a distinct aversion to relationships, and shifters in general.

“So what does this broken engagement have to do with us? I mean me?” she said, averting her eyes.

“Did my mother explain to you how our beasts sometimes recognize their mates? The need to claim her and mark her as our own?”

“Kind of. Thanks for reminding me, asshole. Get off.” She bucked under him like a wild cat. Ryker wondered if he should tell her he liked it. If he did though, she’d probably stop.

His attempt to kiss her into submission met with nipping teeth, the metallic taste of blood in his mouth did not deter him. She had a right to her anger. He had marked her without permission, never mind that he didn’t regret it. At least he had the satisfaction of knowing no other male would or could claim her.

With her hands held tightly above her head, he tortured her breasts, having noticed her sensitivity to them. His lips caught one bud tightly and he rolled it, abrading the sensitive nub against his teeth. He opened his mouth wide and took her tit in his mouth, sucking on her and gradually feeling her tense, fighting motions relax as he continued his ministrations. Evangaline moved against him, her hips arching.

At the sound of a moan, he stopped his delicious calming measures.

“As I was saying...” She tensed slightly beneath him. He looked into her heavy lidded eyes and saw her watching him warily. “My beast has never wanted to mark a woman until it met you.”

“Not even Vivian?” She spoke tentatively and then seemed surprised at her question.

“Only you. I admit, I never expected my beast would react so strongly when it found our mate. Nor was I prepared for how overwhelming the need would be to claim you when we came together that first time.”

“So you didn’t actually want me?” Her voice seemed oddly subdued and he wanted to gnash his teeth. *I’m saying this all wrong, dammit.*

He rubbed his hardness against her. “Does that feel like I don’t want you?”

“So, it’s just sex?”

Ryker didn’t know what to answer. He wanted to scream, “No, I fucking love you, you stubborn twit,” but his mother’s warning to take it slowly tempered his response. “I think we both can’t deny that our bodies are in complete harmony. Maybe when we get to know each other better, something else will develop.”

She gnawed her lip. “What does being your mate mean then, other than fucking a lot?”

Ryker controlled his surprise at how her question seemed accepting of the situation. “We are exclusive to each other. I touch and desire no one else and neither do you.” Or else he and his beast would tear the other man to pieces.

“I can handle that. I am not moving in with you though,” she scowled.

*Yet,* thought Ryker. If she thought she’d be sleeping alone ever again, then he’d soon



disabuse her of that notion. “Fine. Anything else you want to ask?”

He could still see a hint of disappointment in her eyes, but he couldn’t figure out what he’d done wrong. She’d stopped fighting him. She’d accepted their mated state, more or less. What had he forgotten?

“Am I going to turn furry on the full moon now that you’ve bitten me?”

Ryker roared with laughter. “Sorry, my sweet *heksen*. You’re still one hundred percent witch. Contrary to popular belief, shifters are born, not created. Any other questions?”

“Yeah, when are you going to shut the fuck up and take care of your mate? You’ve tortured my body enough, don’t you think?”

Ryker got the hint and set himself to the task of pleasing his mate.

\* \* \* \*

Evangeline couldn’t believe she’d agreed to stay his mate, even if it was a foregone conclusion. *Why do I feel sad it’s just about good sex? It’s what I wanted, right? I mean it’s not as if I wanted him to profess love for me or something. I’m a witch, and an evil one to boot. Who’d be stupid enough to fall in love with me?*

Closing her eyes and letting the sensual feel of his tongue and hands caress her body, so sweetly and reverently, she could almost pretend this shifter, this man she’d fought so hard against, did love her. When his cock slid into her wet pussy and his eyes caught hers, she could almost fool herself into thinking the soft, yet possessive, look in his eyes might be love.

Her climax claimed her fast and hard and he quickly followed suit, bellowing her name before going rigid above her. Rolling so he lay on his back with her sprawled on top of him, he stroked her hair from her face.

“I wish we could lie in bed like this all day, but your sister’s wedding is tomorrow and we still have no idea what’s going on with Rumpel’s daughter.”

Evangeline frowned. “I don’t like it. It feels like we’re being jerked around, and at this point, I don’t know where else to look.”

“So we do it the hard way.”

“Which is?” she asked, looking up at him.

“Keep our eyes open, and when trouble hits, fight back fast, hard and dirty. You in, witch?”

Evangeline’s lips tilted into a smile. “I like the way you think. I’m definitely in. We’ll make them sorry they ever decided to mess with Wicked Incorporated and her big pussy cat.”

He pretended affront and said, “Hey,” which quickly turned into, “Aah,” as she fought his sudden tickle attack with her tongue and hands in sensitive places.

Evangeline looked up at him just as she climaxed again and lost herself in the heated gaze of his golden glowing eyes. She couldn’t help the thought that ran through her mind as he came with a final, hard thrust. *Big, powerful and ... mine.*

## Chapter Nine

Ryker woke to a raging hard on caused by one wicked witch who'd positioned herself between his legs.

"Have a nice nap?" she purred, wrapping her hands around his thick shaft. Her bright green eyes regarded him mischievously as she poised her lips above his mushroomed head.

*Now there's something I wouldn't mind seeing every morning.* He lost all coherent thought when she swirled her tongue around the tip of his cock, licking it lavishly like the yummiest of ice cream cones.

"I was thinking about the job," she said, stopping her delicious ministrations. "And I think I've come up with a plan."

"Sure." Without even hearing it, Ryker was prepared to agree, anything to get her back on track and continuing what she'd started with her mouth.

Her lips widened in a smile. "Aren't you the least bit curious about my plan?"

"*Heksen*, you've got my cock in your hand and your mouth is an inch away. The only thing I'm curious about right now is how deep you can take me."

She eyed his length as if calculating, an up close perusal that made a drop of come pearl at the tip of his shaft. Her tongue darted out and lapped it up and Ryker couldn't help groaning.

"So anyway, I thought since we have no idea what to expect, we should do a bait and switch."

Ryker looked at her with hooded eyes. "Witch, I told you we'll do whatever you want. Just suck me."

"Like this?" Ryker let out a shout and he dug his fingers into the sheets when she enveloped him in—completely. Her lips slid down, down, down the length of his shaft, unhesitating. She didn't stop until she touched the skin at the base. Her throat convulsed around his cock, so deep had she taken him, a hot, tight and wet feeling that had him trembling in his attempt not to come.

Slowly, her lips slid back up until, with a pop, she pulled her mouth off his cock. "Okay, now that your curiosity about my deep throating abilities has been assuaged, let me tell you the rest of my plan."

Too aroused and stunned to speak, he listened as she outlined her plan. Brilliant, yet possibly dangerous, he had to admit it would probably give them their best shot.

"I don't like the fact you're placing yourself in danger," he growled.

She replied with a hard suck on his swollen head which made his eyes roll back in his head. *Holy fuck, she's good.*

Coming up for air, she said, "I'll be fine. Besides, my big kitty wouldn't let anything happen to me."

His beast roared in agreement, and Ryker silently echoed. *No one will hurt my witch or I'll fucking kill them.*

"Now, we only have a little bit of time before I've got to get ready to go, so lie back and get ready to scream my name."

Ryker's hips bucked as her lips covered him again, the wet tightness of her mouth so

erotic around his throbbing rod. She worked him fast. She sucked him hard. Ryker's head thrashed from side to side and his fingers dug into the mattress, tearing the sheet in his pleasure.

"I'm gonna come," he managed to gasp, hoping she would stop so he could sink into her velvety softness, but instead she gripped him more tightly, her sucking action never pausing.

He opened his eyes and looked down at her. He found her watching him, the wildness and arousal he could see in her eyes pushing him over the edge. Like a volcano, he shot his load, and she took it, every last drop. Then she swallowed, which blew Ryker away.

*I am never letting her go.*

\* \* \* \*

The smoking look in Ryker's eyes when he came made Evangaline cream hard. She swallowed the hot juice that belonged to him uniquely as he lost control and came.

*I wish this could last forever. I've never felt like this about a man before.*

With a smile and a lick of her lips, she went to get off the bed, but found herself flat on her back instead with a heavy body crushing hers.

"Hold onto the head board," he growled.

Evangaline thought about arguing that she needed to shower and get ready, but the look in his eyes promised pleasure, and her body needed release. Craved it.

She wrapped her fingers around the bars of her headboard. Ryker gave her a wicked smile before kneeling between her legs and spreading them wide.

"Sooo sweet," he whispered. Then he lifted her up and feasted on her.

He started out by nibbling her soft inner thighs, light, butterfly caresses that had her quickly panting, but unable to squirm in his firm grasp. The feel of his warm breath across her sensitive lower lips made her gasp.

"Ryker, please." She pleaded with him, too aroused to wait.

"Is *this* what you want?" he asked. His hot mouth opened wide and he took her in his mouth, his tongue spreading her lips and lapping at the moistness within.

"Yes," she screamed, her fingers turning white where she gripped the bars tight.

He tortured her, his agile tongue licking her and flicking her clit. He alternated with sucking her and stabbing his tongue inside her, driving her wild with his mouth.

Evangaline's head thrashed from side to side, and she couldn't stop moaning, so close to the edge did he bring her.

"Come for me, *heksen*," he whispered against her sex before plunging three fingers inside, unerringly finding her g-spot and rubbing it. When he applied his tongue to her clit again while pumping her with his fingers, she lost it.

Pelvic muscles clenching, she came screaming as wave after wave of bliss crashed through her. And still he tortured her. His tongue flicked faster on her clit and his fingers kept rubbing her. Barely finished with her first orgasm, she went over the edge again, the ecstasy so overwhelming she blacked out for a moment.

Finally, he let her go. Laying himself alongside her, he cradled her in his arms, his lips lightly brushing her temple with kisses.

"*That's* just a teaser," he whispered to her. "Once the wedding is done and the plan executed successfully, I'm going to make love to you and make you come until you

literally can't walk."

Evangeline shuddered in his arms, which he tightened around her in a warm embrace she never wanted to leave.

*Fuck me, I think I fell in love.*

## Chapter Ten

The eight hour difference between the United States and St. Petersburg meant they had to be showered and ready to go by four AM. They'd used the few hours they had left before to hash out the details of Evangaline's plan and to meet with Rumpelstiltskin to ensure he was on board.

With a hard kiss, Ryker admonished her to be careful, a warning that had her eyes widen in surprise then soften in a look he'd rarely seen. She left with the first group through the portal that would take them halfway across the world in the space of a few seconds.

Ryker distrusted the demons provided by Satan to open the portals for the guests to arrive quickly and comfortably, but he had to admit it beat a stupidly long plane trip and having to put up with TSA thugs. He also didn't like having Evangaline leave ahead of him. His beast paced, anxious at the fact its mate—*our mate*—was so far from them. Knowing she could take care of herself didn't alleviate his feelings; rather, they amplified them, for he knew how much trouble she could cause. An endearing quality most of the time, but only so long as he could be on hand to help her out if trouble arose.

Finally, his turn arrived and joining the group of wedding guests that included Rumpelstiltskin and Tina, they went through the portal.

Seconds later, emerging from the portal, Ryker blinked in the bright sunlight and gazed in begrudging admiration at the Catherine palace where the wedding would soon take place. Ostentatious, but definitely impressive. Having pulled the first round of nanny duty because, as his witch put it, he didn't need to do anything to make himself look pretty, he followed a few paces behind Rumpel and his little girl.

Ryker still couldn't believe he was attending the wedding of the anti-Christ, not to mention said man would be marrying Evangaline's sister. *What kind of family am I getting into?* It would sure make for interesting family get-togethers.

\* \* \*

Inside, Evangaline had to restrain herself from running even though her sister seemed determined to drive her to it.

"I look fat, don't I?" Isobel said, twirling to look at her ass in the mirror.

"Your scrawny ass is still as skinny as the rest of you," reassured Evangaline.

"Would you untangle your knickers from the knot you've put them in? You love him, don't you?"

"Of course I do," said Isobel blinking. "Did you just use the L-word?"

Evangaline shot her sister a dirty look.

"So how are you and that hunky shifter of yours doing?" asked Isobel slyly, adjusting her neckline to deepen her cleavage.

"He's not mine," mumbled Evangaline. *Although his beast did mark me as his. I just wish I knew how the man feels about me.*

"Oh, please. The two of you are meant for each other."

"Yeah, even if I did like him, there's the whole different species thing going on. Do

you really think granddad would go for it? Or mother?" Evangaline actually didn't care what her family thought, but she wanted Isobel off her back.

"Actually, mother liked him."

"She *what*?" Evangaline just stared at her sister dumbstruck.

"She had coffee with him when we were doing the dress fittings and she's all for it. She just says it's a shame you can't make babies."

"I don't like babies, remember," said Evangaline with a glower, not understanding why she felt a pang at the thought of never having a cute and sweet little boy that resembled Ryker with his vivid blue eyes.

And at that thought, Evangaline finally knew without a shadow of doubt. *I love him.*

Sitting down hard, something of her shock must have registered in her face, for her sister rushed over to her and clasped her hands. "What's wrong?"

"I think I love him."

"But that's wonderful," exclaimed Isobel.

Evangaline shook her head. "No. He doesn't love me back."

"Are you sure about that?"

Evangaline's brow knotted in confusion. "I don't know. I've never felt like this before, all confused and stuff. It's almost nauseating."

"Tell him," said Isobel patting her hand. "I think you might be surprised at his answer."

*Admit my feelings? What if he rejects or mocks me? I can't even turn him into a frog.*

There was a knock on the door and the wedding planner from Hell—literally—stuck her horned demon head around the jamb. "It's time, ladies. Let's get this show moving."

Evangaline wore a scowl as she started her walk down the aisle created in the ballroom between the sections of seats, her bouquet of blood red roses clutched tightly. Then she saw him.

Ryker stood devastatingly tall and handsome with the other groomsmen. When their eyes met, his lips curled into a smile just for her. His blue eyes smoldered with appreciation and Evangaline couldn't help the brilliant smile that burst forth. What a shame they couldn't ditch this matrimonial circus and find a secluded closet somewhere, or even just a private wall.

Standing on the bride's side, she couldn't stop staring at Ryker, and even odder, he never took his eyes off her.

Mentally slapping herself, she reminded herself that they were still on a job, not to mention her sister was getting married. She flicked a look over at Tina, who stood beside her, waiting her turn to sing, then at Isobel who stared up at her prince of Hell with so much joy it made Evangaline sick.

*Oh fuck, I hope I don't look like that when I stare at Ryker.*

Finally, the ceremony came to a close, and the presiding hooded figure said, "I now pronounce you man and wife. May you live forever, and cursed be any who would draw you apart."

Those words were the cue for Tina to step forward and even if she appeared shy, the voice that burst forth from her frail form would have made angels weep. She truly had a musical gift, and as she sang of love and commitment, Evangaline couldn't help looking over at Ryker. The burning look in his eyes made her shiver.

A last lingering note and the audience burst in thunderous applause. Ryker hovered

around Tina and her father as Evangaline, at the bullying insistence of her mother and sister, stood for photos. As soon as she could, she escaped and met up with Ryker and her patron.

“Okay, time to do this. Come on,” she said leading the way, tossing her bouquet at a startled nymph.

They went as a group to the dining hall. They browsed the varied foods set up on display as a buffet, a vast selection to tempt all kinds of palates—although Evangaline wondered who would want to eat the live frogs.

They ate their meal with watchful eyes, Tina sat tucked between them and Ryker pretended to down a lot of alcohol. Around them, beings of all kinds talked and laughed. The beings ranged from human looking to demonic, with other fairy tale creatures in between. Evangaline felt anticipation rising as the time for the execution of her plan got closer.

Dinner done, the cutting of the cake accomplished without bloodshed—how disappointing—the crowd flowed back into the ballroom for the dancing that would begin shortly. Evangaline thanked the fact her sister had vetoed speeches at her wedding, or else things might have gotten ugly considering the amount of alcohol being siphoned by the guests.

Once the band from Hell—Satan’s Rockers—got the party going, Evangaline looked at Ryker and nodded her head.

Ryker, with a smile meant to look drunken, grabbed her ass and Evangaline let out a shriek and slapped him.

“You dirty shifter. Keep your fucking hands to yourself.”

“Uptight witch,” he taunted back. “What’s wrong? You a fucking dyke?”

“That’s it,” she exclaimed whirling to Rumpel. “I will not work with this asshole any longer. I quit.”

Turning on her heel, she stalked from the room and, in order to make it believable, went through a waiting portal away from the wedding.

Now came the sneaky, fun part.

\* \* \* \*

Ryker followed Tina to the ladies room and after taking a quick peek inside, let her in alone. He stood outside with his arms folded over his chest waiting.

Several minutes later, Tina came skipping back out.

“Ready, witch?”

“Let’s nab some bad guys,” Evangaline replied in her new little girl voice.

Ryker hoped her plan worked. At least no matter what happened, Tina would be safe. Spirited away secretly, his witch, under the cover of a glamor, took Tina’s place and made herself the target.

Escorting her back to the ballroom, he saw Rumpel look over at them and he inclined his head slightly to indicate the plan was in motion.

Now he needed to find a believable distraction so that someone could attempt to nab the fake Tina.

Turned out he didn’t need to look, the diversion found him.

“There you are,” said a soft voice belonging to none other than his ex-fiancée, Vivian.

“Vivian,” he said turning to face her.

Clad in a shimmering teal gown that set off the platinum of her hair nicely, he found her beautiful; however, she stirred nothing in him, not even hatred.

“Hello, Ryker,” she said, smiling at him tremulously.

Ryker wanted to walk away, but from the corner of his eye, he could see his disguised witch still weaving through the crowd, no one having made a move on her yet.

“Why are you here?” he asked suddenly. “You aren’t acquainted with either the bride or the groom?”

“What do you mean why? You invited me. I have to say I was surprised given what happened between us. But I’ve had time to think and mother—”

Ryker stopped listening. *Fuck, Vivian’s a plant to distract me.* His eyes searched the crowded room, just in time, he caught a glimpse of Tina holding her mother’s hand and leaving the ballroom.

Sprinting through the crowd, he began unbuttoning his shirt, jostling revelers. *Fuck this.* With a roar, his beast burst through his tux and landed with a soft thud on the marbled floor. Given the gathering of magical and supernatural beings, no one even batted an eye as he moved through them quickly in his cat form.

Slipping through the door his disguised witch had exited with Heidi, he peered around. A flash of color caught his eye. Slinking through the darkness, he crept up and heard voices.

“I brought her like you asked, darling,” said Heidi.

Ryker peered through the bushes hiding his quarry and coiled his hind legs, ready to spring.

A stranger smiled coldly at Heidi. “There’s a good girl. Now go back to the ballroom and forget any of this happened.” With a wave of his hands, the stranger used magic on Tina’s mother who, with a vacuous smile, headed back the way she’d come.

*Shit, a wizard.*

“As for you, little girl, we’re going to go on a little trip.”

Tina’s little girl shape disappeared and Evangaline, looking like a delicious pink bonbon in her bridesmaid’s dress, shook her head at the wizard.

“I don’t think so, asshole.”

Ryker smelt the ozone as his witch drew the magic into herself, the static electricity of it making her hair flutter and her eyes turned black.

However, when she released her magic against Heidi’s mysterious fiancé, nothing happened, to him at least. However, the magical backlash knocked Evangaline back hard.

The bastard laughed and held up an amulet. “Sorry witch, but with this special artifact I found in Merlin’s tomb, I am immune against magical attack.”

*But not big kitty ones.*

With a snarl of rage, Ryker pounced, all four claws out and fangs just aching for a target.

\* \* \* \*

Evangaline shook her head trying to clear it. *Fucker had a magical shield.* Sitting up, she saw Ryker, in his black panther form, come sailing out of nowhere and land on the wizard.

It turned out the wizard had more than one trick up his sleeve. With nary a trace of



magic, the wizard suddenly became a striped white tiger, and since touching Ryker didn't dispel the illusion, the only conclusion she could come to was the stranger was both wizard and shifter. *I'll be damned. What happened to the species not being able to mix?*

Snarling and slashing, the two massive beasts rolled through the bushes onto the dimly lit terrace, their claws raking bloody grooves.

Evangeline could only watch helplessly and it pissed her off.

*Ryker's getting hurt. I need to stop this, but how. I can't use my magic.*

*At least not while he's wearing that amulet.*

"Ryker, pull off his amulet."

Teeth suddenly clamping around the dangling ornament, Ryker tore it from the wizard's feline neck. But in doing so, he left himself open and the white tiger, with a roar of rage, scored his claws down Ryker's side, opening several deep, bleeding lacerations.

"Son of a bitch!" Evangeline screamed. "How dare you fucking hurt him?"

Sucking into herself an immense amount of power, she flung it all at the white tiger, only belatedly realizing that being part-shifter the magic might not work. She needn't have feared. Apparently only a full shifter could dispel magic. With wide eyes and a horrified scream, the wizard-shifter hybrid turned into a grease spot on the terrace.

Wild clapping erupted and Evangeline looked over to see a crowd had gathered to watch the fight.

Ignoring them, Evangeline ran over to the panther who lay on the ground, and even as she approached, he reverted back to his naked, male body.

Dropping to her knees beside him, she could see the blood streaking his skin.

"Ryker," she cried. "Talk to me."

"A kiss," he gasped.

Immediately, she ducked down, and finding his lips, sealed hers to his. *He's dying, oh fuck. Why did this have to happen?*

His lips devoured hers hungrily and he murmured against them "My sweet witch. You didn't really think a puny jerk like that could kill me, did you?"

Evangeline rocked back on her heels. "But I saw you get hurt."

"And I am a shifter with excellent recuperative powers." Ryker rolled onto his back and showed her the already closing wounds. He also showed off his very large erection which garnered quite the collection of gasps and titters from the watching crowd.

Cheeks burning, Evangeline got up. "I'll go find you some clothes."

*And perhaps strike some women blind while I'm at it,* she thought, eyeing the women who couldn't stop pointing and staring at her naked man.

"Anyone who wants to live, leave now," she snarled, not caring if she appeared jealous. *He's mine.*

However, her words had the desired effect and the crowd moved back indoors.

Now to find some clothes so she could dress him long enough to get him somewhere where she could undress him and fuck him for scaring her. Then she'd screw him again for coming to her rescue. Then...

Hmm, considering what she planned to do, she'd better grab some food as well to keep them energized.

\* \* \* \*

Ryker almost laughed when his witch made the gawkers scatter. At least she seemed

uninjured. The rage he'd felt when that wizard had hurt her ... well, it was a good thing she'd turned him into a grease spot because his plans for the bastard had involved a lot more blood and screaming and time.

He'd quite enjoyed her concern over his injuries. *I do believe my witch cares for me.* Something he planned to make her admit to later on when he got her alone and naked. The things he planned to do to her...

Standing up, uncaring of his nudity—if you've got it, flaunt it—he waited for her to return, his face craned up at the half moon.

"Oh, Ryker, that was so brave." gushed Vivian from behind him.

Ryker whirled and saw her eyes aglow with admiration, a look Ryker had never seen before on her face, and one that rendered her quite pretty. However, she didn't even come close to comparing with his witch, whom he craned around looking for. *I'd better get rid of Vivian before she gets back.*

"Listen Viv—"

The body that plastered itself to him and kissed him took him by surprise, and he looked down to see Vivian with her eyes closed, pressing herself passionately against him. Unfortunately for her, it left him cold.

However, he knew someone who would be more than hot if she saw this pathetic attempt.

When he heard the snarled, "Bitch, get your hands off of him," he realized it was already too late and prepared to enjoy the fireworks.

Vivian pulled back with a smirk. "You must be the witch he's been sleeping with. Well, you can just go find yourself a new boy toy. The engagement is back on, right darling?"

Ryker raised his hands and shook his head at Vivian. "Like fuck. I've found my mate, and if I were you, I'd run because she is *not* happy you touched me."

Evangaline graced him with a smile that made him harder than a rock, and then with a snarl she turned to Vivian, who stupidly stood her ground.

"Listen up and listen good, you little fucking bitch. Ryker is mine, as in do not touch, look or think of him, *mine*."

"But you're a witch? You can't be a couple," said Vivian stubbornly.

"You know what? Fuck being diplomatic, you stupid cow." Evangaline drew back her fist and cold cocked Vivian, dropping her hard.

Ryker's heart filled with love for his feisty, evil witch. *And I am not waiting a second longer to tell her.*

\* \* \* \*

"You really are evil, aren't you?" Ryker said, his words a cruel reminder of what so many others had said to her. Of course, she hadn't cared what they'd thought. *But I care what Ryker thinks.*

Evangaline hung her head in response, ashamed at the tears that pricked her eyes. Calloused fingers gripped her chin and tilted her face back up.

"What the hell are you crying for?" he asked aghast. "I was just stating the obvious."

"I'm sorry, but I refuse to be some perfect fucking Barbie doll. I can't help myself. Evilness runs in my genes."

"Why the fuck would I want a dumb, cookie cutter doll when I can have you?"

“But I’m not nice,” she replied dumbly.

“Screw a nice girl. I want a wicked witch. Besides, I happen to like watching you at work.”

Evangaline suddenly couldn’t breathe, and she obviously couldn’t hear because it had sounded like he’d said he wanted her.

“Ah, my sweet *heksen*, don’t tell me you haven’t figured it out yet. I thought you were supposed to be the smart one.”

“Spell it out for me,” she asked, wanting him to say it.

“I love you. And now that I’ve proven I’m braver and said it first, what about you?”

“I love you, too, you stupid beast.”

Thick arms crushed her ribs as he swung her around enthusiastically and let out a roar of excitement.

“So when do you want to tie the knot?”

“Is this is your obtuse way of asking me to marry you?”

“Oh, please, if I got on my knees, you’d just hurt me. What do you say? Wanna get hitched?”

Evangaline’s eyes almost bugged out of her head. “Eew! What is wrong with you?”

Howling with laughter, Ryker swung her round again. “Just kidding.”

“Listen, can’t we just live in sin for a while? I’m really not keen on the idea of going through all that,” she said jerking her head at the castle where the sounds of revelry floated out to them on the terrace.

“Ooh, more sinning,” he said with a leer. “Count me in.”

“Here put these on before I have to hurt someone else,” she said, handing him the clothes she’d picked up from their hidden emergency stash. Although personally, she preferred him naked. First things first, though, they needed to let Rumpel know they’d succeeded in taking care of the villain just in case he hadn’t heard. Afterwards, she planned to claim every inch of her lover’s luscious body.

As soon as they walked in the door, Rumpelstiltskin cornered them. “An excellent job once again by Wicked Incorporated. I’ve had your fee deposited already. Plus, at the requests of your respective mothers’, I’ve thrown in a bonus. Congratulations, I’ve granted you both the ability to reproduce with each other.”

Evangaline went still as Rumpel’s words penetrated. “You did what?” she said, using a full lungful of air for each word and taking a menacing step forward.

Rumpel chuckled nervously. “Now, Evangaline, trust me. You’ll thank me for this later.”

At her side, Ryker started laughing, deep guffaws even, as he said, “Run, Rumpel ‘cause I am not stupid enough to try and stop her.”

With an undignified squeak, the ugly gnome turned and fled, but not quick enough to escape Evangaline’s revenge. She saw with her magic the glamor he hid under and she ripped it away.

Then she laughed, for instead of seeing Rumpelstiltskin’s usual gnarly mug, his real form appeared: a six foot something blond Adonis. His face appeared as a chiseled work of perfection, while his muscles rippled through the tattered clothing he’d torn through in his sudden growth spurt.

Squeals erupted from a band of nymphs in the corner. “Master, you’ve returned to pleasure us!” Like an ocean of lemurs, they, and others of the female persuasion, came in

a rippling wave of hair and pastel colors.

Rumpel turned his transformed face to her, a look of horror etched on it.

Evangeline just crossed her arms over her chest. “Next time you meddle in someone’s life, ask first. Now I’d suggest you run, it will be twenty four hours before you can put your ugly glamor back on.”

Poor Rumpel, he tried to run but his new long stride was no match for the determined women who mobbed him.

Strong arms wrapped around her, and Ryker’s breath tickled her ear when he said. “Dammit, *heksen*, you are so wickedly hot. Let’s go practice making a baby.”

Her foot slamming his instep didn’t stop him from throwing her over his shoulder and striding through a crowd that didn’t even look twice—after all, at the anti-Christ’s wedding, some indiscretions were expected as par for the course.

## Chapter Eleven

Ryker found an empty room with a bed and he threw her onto the soft mattress. While he locked the door, Evangaline stripped out of her clothes, a fact that made his eyes glow golden with appreciation when he turned around.

Finally naked, she smiled and beckoned to him. He stripped out of his shirt and pants first, his jutting erection bobbing eagerly at her as he strode to the bed.

Laying his body on top of hers, she winced. He rolled off her, instantly.

"You're hurt? Where?" His hands smoothed over skin and not finding anything on her front, he flipped her to her stomach and she heard him suck in a breath.

"It's just a bruise," she said.

"You're hurt," Ryker growled.

"So kiss it better," she said, looking back at him over her shoulder.

He did, his lips caressing her bruised skin and then moving down her back to the crevice of her ass. He spread her cheeks and thighs, his calloused fingers finding her wet and ready for him.

"Get on your hands and knees. I can't wait. I need you now."

Evangaline quickly obeyed, her need for him just as urgent. The head of his cock speared her, its hard length sliding in and filling her up. He grabbed her waist and began pumping her, and Evangaline gasped.

"Don't." Thrust. "You." Pound. "Ever." Quicker. "Scare me like that again," he finally said pistoning his hips.

"Same to you," she panted.

He found her clit with wet fingers and rubbed it until the stimulation was enough to make her scream and send her over the edge. But Ryker wasn't yet done with her. He grabbed a handful of her hair and she eagerly arched back. He leaned forward, still thrusting, and his sharp teeth found the soft flesh of her nape and bit down. *Oh, the ecstasy.* With a shuddering cry, she gushed and convulsed in the throes of a major orgasm. Wave after wave of bliss crashed through her body and her vaginal muscles squeezed him tightly. With a final deep lunge and a bellow, he came inside her.

She came to lying on top of him.

"I love you," he said, his chest rumbling under her cheek.

"I love you, too." She couldn't believe how easily the words rolled off her tongue and how right they felt.

"Now, before I wash every inch of you with my tongue, I've got to ask, because since our fake fight, I've been bombarded with rumors. Which of them are true?"

"All of them of course."

He tilted her chin up so he could look her in the face and Evangaline grinned, which was so unlike her, but dammit, being around him made her ... happy.

"So you did turn Derek into a doormat?" he asked.

"Rat, actually. Jerk dumped me for being too evil." What a pity the spell only lasted twenty four hours.

"Derek was an idiot. You're just confident, nothing wrong with that. What about the guy you glued to the hood of a police cruiser, naked?"

“Beating up hookers.”

“Grease puddle later identified as Gary Whitecloak?”

“Magical rapist.” Evangaline had set herself up as bait one night, and the look on his face before she turned him into a melted popsicle—priceless.

“I hate to break it to you,” Ryker said after a few more queries about her reputation. “But you’re not evil.”

“What are you talking about?” Evangaline huffed, leaning up on his chest. “I am ruthless and take no shit.”

“Yeah, but from what you’ve told me, everyone’s deserved it. I mean, do you go out and kill innocents?”

“Of course not,” she said frowning.

“What if they called you a bad name?”

“I have more control than that,” she said rolling her eyes. “Although, I might make them grovel a bit.”

“See, you’re actually not all that wicked.”

She squirmed up and straddled him. “Take that back. I am the wickedest.”

“In the bedroom, maybe.”

“If you tell anyone otherwise, I’ll masturbate and make you watch with no touching.”

His eyes widened in horror. “I take it back. You are the wickedest witch ever. And even better, you’re all mine.”

His words made Evangaline glow and feel all warm and mushy inside. They also made her horny. Good thing he had a lot of stamina, something she made good use of that night, numerous times.

## Epilogue

Ryker's arm curled tight around Evangaline's plump frame, and he smiled contentedly from their perch on the roof of the library. Halloween night had arrived with clear skies and a rare full moon. Dusk had already fallen and children were out in costumed hordes, their cheerful voices floating up into the night sky.

"Ready?" he asked giving her a squeeze.

"Totally," Evangaline said with a grin. Moving away from Ryker, she put her glamor into place, a hideous crone of a witch replete with a wart and straw-like black hair.

Ryker shuddered. "That is absolutely hideous."

With a grin that revealed yellowed buckteeth, she cackled. "Your turn."

Ryker's body rippled and out sprang his black panther. She gave her beast a quick scratch that had him purring, then she pulled out the harness they'd had specially made and strapped the baby saddle to Ryker's transformed back. She plopped their daughter—Mortika—into the customized seat.

Impending motherhood had initially been a cruel shock—she'd gone on a rampage that had done wonders for her already evil reputation and brought in a flood of jobs for Wicked Incorporated. Thankfully, she hadn't done any permanent damage during her pregnancy. They *really* hadn't been kidding about those mood swings.

Once she'd gotten over the anger and morning sickness—something that had made Rumpel leave town in terror—the birth of her daughter had turned into a surprisingly fulfilling experience. There was nothing like seeing one's own flesh and blood performing her first evil deed—wiggling chubby little fingers to steal another child's lollipop. And she became her father's pride and joy when she turned into a frisky, sharp-clawed kitten.

Now, to Evangaline's delight, she was about to introduce her daughter to a yearly tradition—ruining Halloween.

"Remember sweetie," Evangaline said to her blue eyed vixen who clapped her chubby hands in glee. "The important thing is to have fun at the expense of others."

Watching with a smile as Ryker bounded among the costumed children, their daughter giggling away, Evangaline felt her heart swell. She might still be the Wickedest Witch, but dammit, against all odds, she'd found true love, and she'd do anything—even kill—to keep it.

## The End

### About the Author:

Eve Langlais, who is in her mid thirties, has been married 11 years to a wonderful man who gave her three beautiful, but distracting children aged ten, seven and four. A military brat, she was born in British Columbia but ended up living all across Canada. She now resides with her family, that also includes two cats and a guinea pig, in the historic town of Bowmanville, Ontario. If you want to get to know her better visit her

website at <http://www.Evelanglais.com> or friend her on FaceBook.



**Meet Lsb Authors At The House Of Sin**  
**Lsbooks.Net**

**We invite you to visit Liquid Silver Books**

LSbooks.com  
for other exciting erotic romances.

**2007: Terran Realm**

Urban fantasy world: TerranRealm.com

**Featured Series:**

**The Zodiac Series: 12 books, 24 stories and authors**  
Two hot stories for each sign, 12 signs

**The Coven of the Wolf by Rae Morgan**  
Benevolent lusty witches keep evil forces at bay

**Fallen: by Tiffany Aaron**  
Fallen angels in hot flight to redeem their wings

**The Max Series by JB Skully**  
Meet Max, her not-absent dead husband, sexy detective Witt, his mother...

And many, many more!